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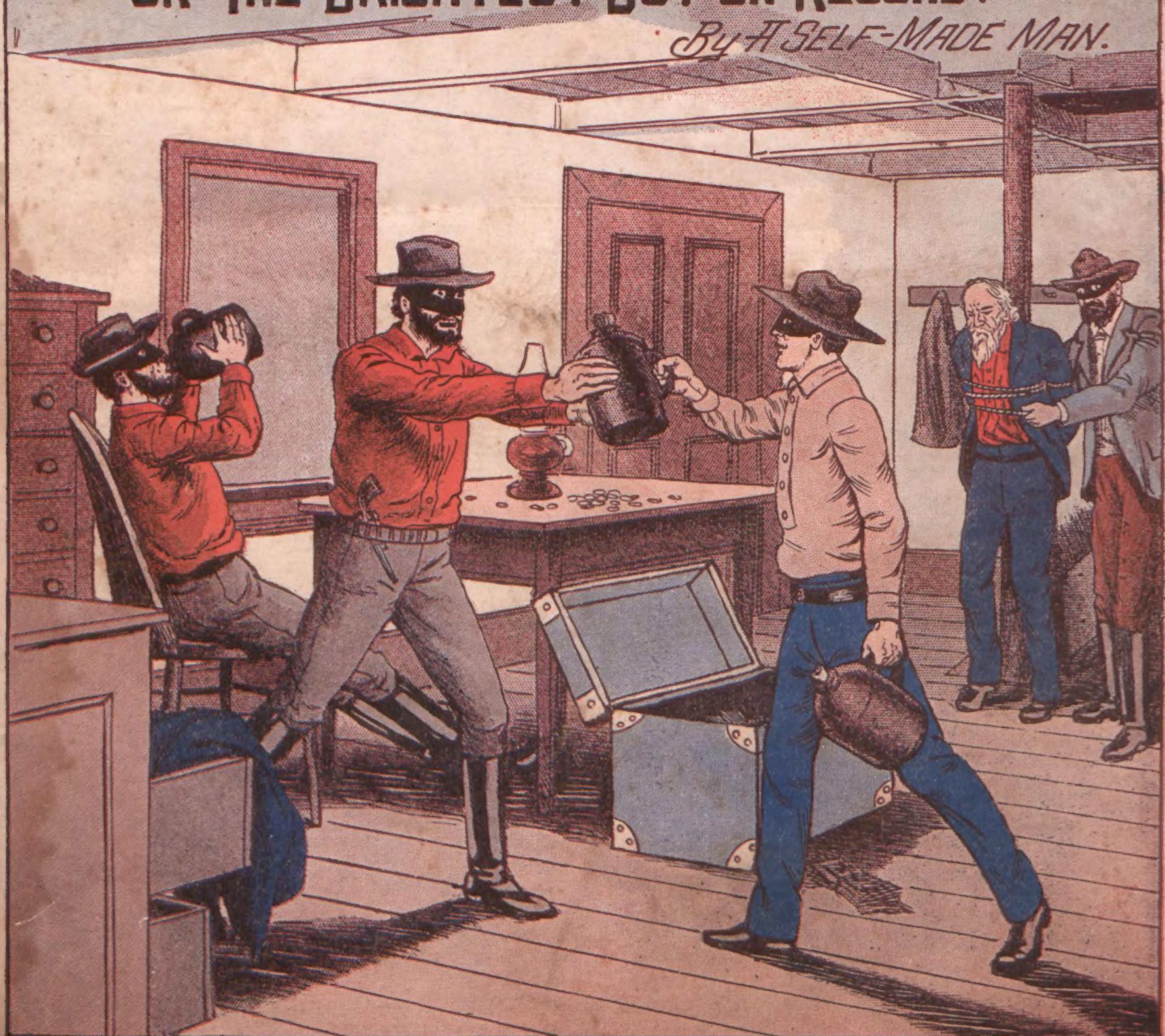
FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF
BOYS THAT MAKE MONEY.

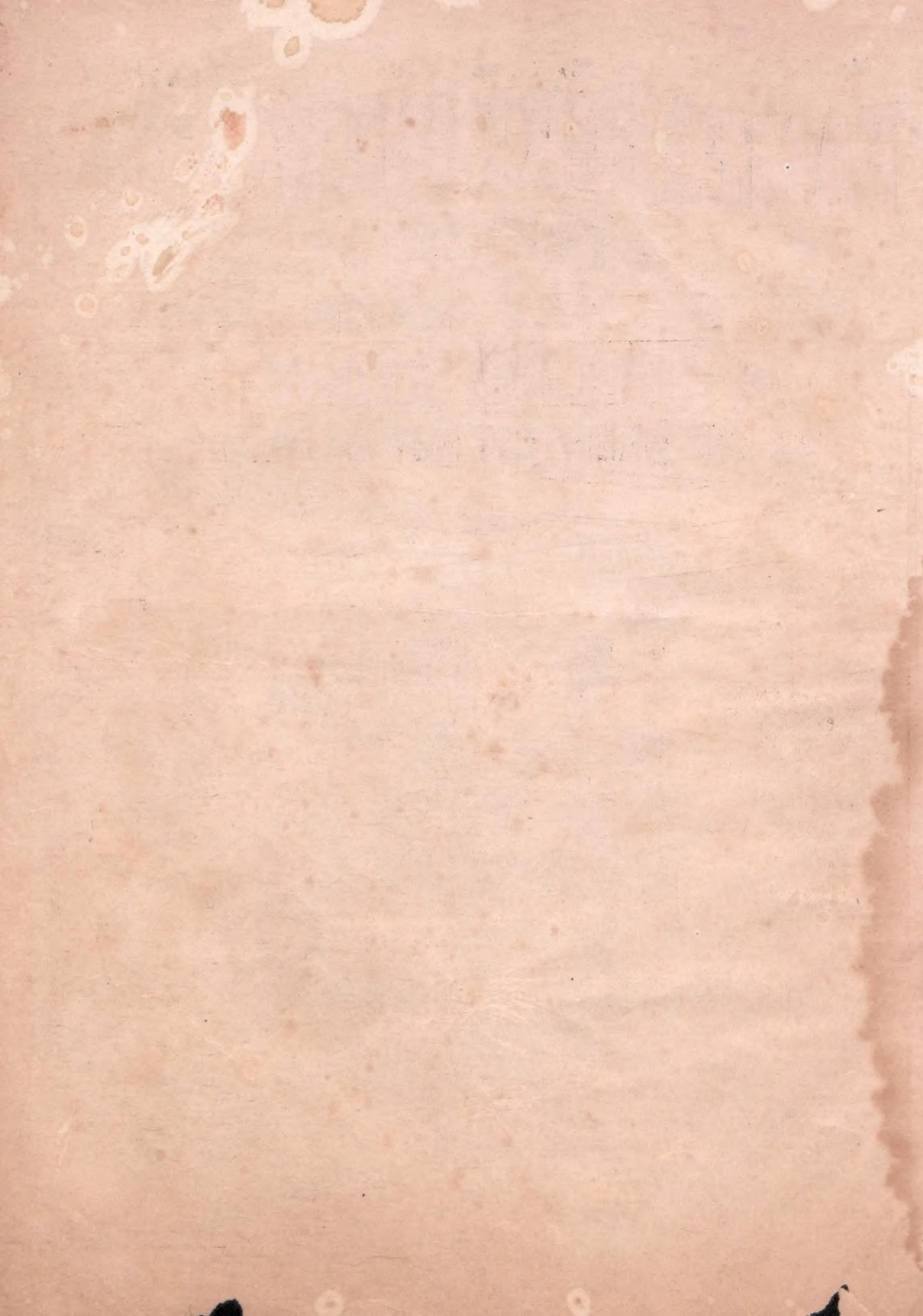
A ROLLING STONE;
OR THE BRIGHTEST BOY ON RECORD.

AND OTHER
STORIES

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



Having secured Matthew Scraggs to a post in the rear of the room, the ruffians ordered Paul to bring forward the demijohns of liquors from the shelf in the corner. Then they proceeded to make merry over their rich haul.



Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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A ROLLING STONE —OR— THE BRIGHTEST BOY ON RECORD

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

PAUL SCOTT AND HIS COMPANION, TOBY TITMARSH.

"Wake up, Toby; I see the lights of San Luis straight ahead!" exclaimed Paul Scott.

The speaker, a stalwart, good-looking boy of seventeen, whose bright eyes and shrewd, alert expression showed that he was above the average in smartness, was driving a strong young mare, attached to a small covered wagon, along a dusty road within sight of the Pacific Ocean.

A prolonged snore was the only response that came from his companion—an uncommonly fat youth, of perhaps fifteen, whose open mouth, pudgy nose, and small eyes were almost lost in the fleshy folds of an enormous pair of cheeks that gave his countenance the appearance of a full moon—who occupied two-thirds of the seat, his head propped against the front hoop of the van, and his senses steeped in a profound repose.

"Gee whiz!" muttered Paul, regarding the fat boy with a grin, "how that chap can sleep! I never saw his equal at it. For sleeping and eating he can hold the medal. Wake up, Toby; wake up, I say!" and he nudged his companion in the ribs.

A short, hideous grunt, ending in a long-drawn-out whistle, came from the fat boy's nose.

"Don't you want something to eat, Toby?" roared Paul in his ear.

The snoring stopped all of a sudden, one eye opened, then the other; finally the fat boy sat up and gazed around him into the dusk which was closing in upon the landscape.

"I thought I heard somebody say dinner was ready," he squeaked, a wistful, hungry look shining from his eyes.

"You must have been dreaming," chuckled Paul, as he chirruped to the mare.

"Maybe I was; but it sounded awful real," replied the boy, smacking his lips.

"Toby Titmarsh," said Paul, solemnly, "if ever there is a post-mortem examination of you I know what the coroner will find inside of you."

"What will they find?" asked Toby, with a look of mild wonder.

"A wolf—maybe two of them."

"Oh! I hope not."

"Are you really hungry again?" snickered Paul.

"Ain't I always hungry?"

"Yes, that's a fact. I don't think I ever heard you admit that you had enough. Do you see those lights ahead?"

Toby rubbed his little round eyes and looked.

"Sure I see them."

"That's San Luis."

"We'll have supper soon, won't we?" eagerly.

"I'm thinking we will."

"That's fine. I'm awful hungry. I could eat—"

"A nice juicy steak with plenty of gravy and other fixings, eh?"

"Don't, Paul; you make my mouth water."

"With a cup of coffee and a slice of pie."

"A slice—a little measly slice—I could eat a whole pie, as big around as that," and the fat boy illustrated by drawing an imaginary circle in the air that answered to the circumference of a fair-sized wash-bowl.

"You've got the healthiest appetite for a small boy I ever saw. It's a wonder you wouldn't get fat," he grinned.

"I thought I was kind of fat," said Toby, looking down at his body, which filled the larger part of the seat.

"Oh, no, you aren't fat. You're only obese."

"What's that?"

"A person is obese when he has an excessive accumulation of adipose tissue," chuckled Paul.

"Have I an excessive accumulation of adipose tissue?"

"Well, rather. You must weigh nearly 200 pounds."

"I don't know. I tried to get weighed the other day in Los Angeles, but the man said I broke his scales."

"He said that, did he?"

"He did, really," replied Toby, innocently.

"Why didn't you go down to the market where they scrape fish and stand on the scales. You couldn't break them."

"What good would that do?"

"You could have given yourself away," chuckled Paul.

Toby didn't see the joke, and he wondered how the scales of the fish would have told him how much he weighed.

And while he was wondering they reached the outskirts of San Luis and drove into that town.

Paul had the name of a cheap hotel, and he asked a passer-by to direct him to it.

In fifteen minutes they arrived in front of the hostelry, and Paul descended from his perch and went in to arrange for a square meal for himself and his companion.

Then he led the wagon into a small yard, gave the mare a drink, tied a bag of oats around her nose, and leaving her to the enjoyment of her evening meal, he led Toby into the washroom, where they tidied themselves up a bit before they marched into the dining-room.

A red-cheeked young woman waited on them when they took their places at the table.

The bill of fare consisted of fried Spanish mackerel, a small steak, boiled potatoes, coffee and pie.

"Is that all the pie I get?" asked Toby, anxiously, gazing down at a very small piece upon his plate.

"Isn't that enough?" snickered Paul.

"Enough!" gasped the fat boy. "Why, there's only two bites in that."

"I'm afraid that's all you'll get, unless I buy you a whole one."

"Do," said Toby, imploringly. "I'll eat it in the wagon."

"All right," replied Paul, good-naturedly. "I'll see if I can get one."

Toby Titmarsh was only half satisfied when he left the table.

There was a dreadful void in his stomach that only a whole pie would satisfy, and fortunately for him Paul succeeded in purchasing the much-desired article.

He mounted to the seat and began to devour it at a rapid rate as the boss of the outfit drove out of the hotel yard and ran up to the principal street in the town.

The wagon was stopped in the busiest section of San Luis, a couple of naphtha torches were stuck into sockets at the rear of the van, the back of which was let down and propped up from underneath, thus forming a platform.

Paul brought from the interior of the wagon a box containing small vials and little round tin boxes and placed it on the front of the platform, then he fetched out a couple of stools, and called Toby, who made his appearance with black face and hands, a wig, a huge collar and checked shirt, and a pair of immensely long shoes.

He had a pair of bones in his hands and he made a most comical negro artist.

Paul himself produced a banjo, tuned up, and then the pair launched into an old-time darky quickstep.

Quite a number of persons had already gathered about the van, but the music soon attracted a crowd.

After Paul had rendered an old plantation ditty in good style, which the spectators roundly applauded, he proceeded to business.

"Gentlemen," he began, taking a bottle with a gaudy label from the box before him, "I have here some of my celebrated Elixir of Life, manufactured by myself, and I alone know the secret of it. This Elixir is two bits a bottle. Taken internally, it's a sure cure for coughs, colds, sore throat, sprain of the vocal organs, and like ills too numerous to mention, a catalogue of which will be found on the wrapper. Full directions are printed on the label, and I can guarantee perfect satisfaction, or the money will be cheerfully refunded. This gentleman takes a bottle. Thank you, sir. Who'll take another bottle? Thank you, sir. You say you want two bottles? Four bits, please. No, sir; there's no discount, not even if you want a dozen bottles. I'm practically giving this stuff away at the price. Some of the medicines used in the manufacture of this peerless cough mixture are controlled by the Drug Trust, which greatly reduces the profit on the article. The Glass Trust—but there, gentlemen, you all know what cormorants the trusts are. They are the bane of this country. If you come a little nearer, sir, I will be able to hand you a bottle. Thank you, sir. Who's next? You, sir? Certainly. Will it cure toothache? No, sir. I am sorry to say that it will not. This is a lung balsam, not a lotion for the teeth. Have you a toothache? Step right up on the platform and I will endeavor to relieve you in three shakes of a lamb's tail, and it won't cost you a cent. Take a seat on that stool. Now, sir, open your mouth and point out the diseased molar."

Paul took a piece of cotton and a bottle of laudanum from his pocket, which he had been using himself, and wetting the cotton, pressed it into the decayed tooth.

In a moment or two the man said he believed the tooth felt better.

"I'm glad to hear it, sir. I dare say that in half an hour the pain will be all gone. You wish to take a bottle of my Elixir? Don't open it until you have occasion to use it, and follow directions carefully. No, I do not guarantee that it will cure consumption. If I could make an Elixir that would master that disease my fortune would soon be made. Who wishes another bottle? Sold again and got the money."

Paul sold a dozen or fifteen bottles of his cough mixture and then the demand for it ceased.

He took up his banjo and he and Toby played another air.

"Now, gentlemen," Paul said once more, taking up one of the small, round tin boxes, "I have here an infallible remedy for corns, bunions, warts and other excrescences of a similar kind. One bit a box. Complete directions how to apply it to the affected part are printed on the cover. One dime, ten cents, secures the wonderful remedy of which I am the sole inventor and proprietor. It succeeds where other remedies fail. No,

sir, it does not remove moles or birthmarks, but it's sure death to corns and bunions. Who'll take a box? Thank you, sir. Who comes next? Wrap up three boxes for that gentleman. Yes, sir, you save a nickel when you take three boxes at one time. Don't be afraid to buy this salve, gentlemen. It will keep for a year at least, if not exposed to the air. If you haven't a corn or bunion now you may have one six months from now, and then how handy it will be to have this wonderful preparation on hand to use. Step right up. Don't be bashful. If you miss this chance to get the only sure pop remedy for corns and bunions you may have reason to regret it at a future time. Wrap up three more boxes, Toby. The gentleman with the light hat takes them."

For an hour and a half the bystanders were alternately entertained and importuned to purchase the salve and the Elixir of Life.

Then the street began to grow deserted and Paul shut up shop for the night.

The covered wagon was driven into a vacant lot, the mare taken out of the shafts and tethered near by, and the two boys retired to rest inside the van.

CHAPTER II.

HELD UP.

Paul Scott was a sort of rolling stone.

He made a living and was accumulating profit by traveling from town to town selling his throat and lung balsam, and his infallible remedy for corns and bunions—both of which he and Toby manufactured themselves from reliable prescriptions, and which, as a rule, proved beneficial when taken according to the printed directions accompanying the article.

He had been following this vocation for nearly a year, the death of his mother, his only surviving parent, having thrown him upon the world to hoe his own way.

Paul, though often flowery and liberal with his words, was always perfectly honest with the public, and had no fear of retracing his route at any time.

At the present time he was touring southern California, working northward toward San Francisco, and thus far had been quite successful since leaving San Diego.

They had spent a week in Los Angeles, where they did a smashing business in both remedies, and were obliged to manufacture a fresh supply.

Paul had picked up Toby Titmarsh in San Diego.

The fat boy was an orphan, too.

Since the death of his uncle, with whom he had lived, and for whom he had helped tend a small stationery store, Toby had encountered hard luck until he ran across Paul Scott.

Just why Paul took a fancy to the youth he couldn't explain, but he hired the lad for a small wage and his keep, and Toby in return became his faithful and willing helper.

Paul fitted him out, taught him to play the bones pretty well, and was delighted to find that when blacked up the fat youth made quite a hit as a negro minstrel.

His appearance in burnt cork, and ridiculous attire, was irresistibly comic.

Whenever he opened his mouth he couldn't help saying something that amused the crowd, so that on the whole he proved a valuable addition to Paul's business.

Next morning early Paul hitched up and drove to the hotel for breakfast, after which he stationed the wagon at a prominent corner and continued to advertise and dispose of his balsam and corn cure until noon.

After dinner they took to the road again en route for San Bruno, a small coast town a few miles to the northward.

Three rough-looking men on horseback left San Luis at the same time and jogged along the road behind them.

An hour passed and the horsemen maintained the same distance behind the wagon.

There was nothing singular in this.

Paul, however, didn't fancy the general appearance of the strangers.

The road passed over a low spur of the mountain range beside which they were journeying, before reaching San Bruno, and Paul had heard in San Luis that a gang of bandits, whose retreat was supposed to be in these mountains, had been holding up travelers along the highroad and robbing dwellings on the outskirts of the neighboring towns.

"Do you see those three horsemen behind us, Toby?" asked Paul, as the road began to leave the vicinity of the shore and curve upward into the range.

Toby twisted his chubby face around the outside of the front hoop supporting the canvas covering of the van and looked backward along the highway.

"Sure I see them," he answered.

"Do you know, I don't like their looks," said Paul, seriously.

"What's the matter with them?"

"They don't look honest to me."

"Oh, my, do you think they mean to rob us?" gasped Toby, putting his hand in his pocket where his few dollars in savings were.

"They look capable of doing 'most anything for the sake of money. They've been following us ever since we left San Luis."

Toby's eyes began to start from their sockets in fear.

"I noticed one of those chaps—the fellow with the smooth face—in the crowd last night when we were doing such a rushing business. I also noticed him hanging around the different corners where we held forth this morning. Then the three of them took dinner at the hotel when we did, and when we drove out of the yard I saw them having their horses saddled. We wasn't a great way down the street before I noticed them jogging along behind the van, and they've been there ever since, though it's nearly three hours since we left San Luis. They may mean nothing, but I'm going to look out for them just the same, for their actions strike me as suspicious."

"You've got a bag of money, Paul. Where can you hide it?"

"I've got it hidden already where I don't think they'll look for it."

"I wish you'd put my money with it," said Toby, anxiously.

"How much have you got about you?"

"I don't know. I'll count it."

Toby found that he had about twelve dollars, all but a five-dollar piece in loose silver.

He liked to carry it that way in his pocket so he could rattle it occasionally.

The jingle of the silver sounded pleasant to his ears.

Its loss he would have regarded as an irreparable misfortune.

"Give me your money, all but a dollar, and hold the reins," said Paul.

Then he stepped over the seat into the body of the van, and for the next few minutes he was busily occupied in placing Toby's wealth in his secret receptacle which he had provided for just such an emergency.

He peeked out through the slit in the back canvas at the horsemen and saw that they had come a trifle closer than before.

He resumed his seat and the reins once more.

"How long before we'll get to San Bruno?" asked Toby, nervously.

"If nothing happens we ought to reach the town in an hour."

"It's awful lonesome up here in the hills," gurgled the fat boy.

They had now been out of sight of the ocean for fifteen minutes.

"It isn't very lively, that's a fact," agreed Paul. "We haven't seen many houses since we lost sight of San Luis."

"Are those men still behind us?" asked Toby, in shaky tones.

"They were a moment ago."

"They could rob us here and nobody would know a thing about it," he gasped.

"They couldn't select a better place to do such a thing," replied Paul, coolly.

"Do you think they will?"

"How do I know what their intentions toward us are?" We've got to take our chances."

"They might shoot us."

"I don't think they'll do that. However, they couldn't miss you if they tried," with a grin.

"Oh, my, don't talk that way; you make me nervous."

"Pshaw! Brace up! If those chaps mean to hold us up we've got to face the music, and get out of it as best we can. I don't imagine they can have any use for my Elixir of Life, or my patent corn and bunion cure. If they want anything it is money, and I don't think they'll find much of that in this outfit."

They came to a level stretch and Paul started the mare on at a lively pace.

Presently they heard the clattering of horses' hoofs behind. Nearer and nearer came the sound until it was close be-

hind, then suddenly the horsemen dashed up on either side of the wagon, one of them spurting ahead and grabbing the mare by the bridle rein.

The speed of the van was checked, while a tall, bearded fellow, yanking an ugly-looking revolver into view, called on Paul to rein in.

He seemed to be the leader of the three rascals, and he spoke in a way that showed that he meant to be obeyed.

"What's this mean?" demanded Paul, resolutely, while Toby collapsed completely, and fell back into the van like a sack of corn.

"Get down!" replied the bearded ruffian, threatening the boy with his weapon at full cock.

The wagon was now at rest in the middle of the road.

Paul decided that the easiest way was the best in dealing with these rascals, so he stepped down into the road.

"Throw up your hands!" cried the leader again.

Paul obeyed.

The smooth-faced man dismounted and approached him.

"Search him!" commanded the leader.

The fellow did it pretty thoroughly, and found something less than three dollars in silver change.

"Where do you keep your money?" demanded the leading ruffian. "Answer me, or I'll put a ball into you."

"Where it's safe," replied Paul, calmly. "I heard in San Luis that there was some chance of our being held up before we reached San Bruno, so I took care not to risk what little money I had made on this road. Uncle Sam will see that it reaches San Francisco before we get there."

The man uttered a roar.

"Search the wagon, Noah!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "Pull that other chap out into the road."

The man addressed as Noah leaped on the dashboard and tore the canvas flap aside.

Then he reached down and grabbed the trembling Toby by the collar.

"Come out of there, you young pig!" he roared. "Come out, or I'll tickle your ribs with my bowie."

Toby emerged, his face as white as chalk, and shaking as with the palsy.

As he stepped out on the dashboard the man gave him a push and the fat boy took a header into the hard road, where he rolled over and lay quite still, as though stunned by the shock.

"That's no way to treat a harmless boy," remonstrated Paul, indignantly.

"Shut up!" answered the leader, in an ugly tone.

Noah searched the van from end to end, but he found only some boxes containing bottles of cough syrup and little round tin boxes of salve, a couple of stray mattresses, which he ripped to pieces with his bowie-knife, some bedclothes, a small trunk, the contents of which he hastily dumped out and scattered around pell-mell; a couple of stools, a banjo hanging against the side of the van, a few paper-covered books, a bound volume of medical recipes, and various other odds and ends of no value to any one but the owner.

The one thing he was in quest of—namely, money—he did not find, and he so reported to the impatient man on horseback outside.

"Have you pulled everything to pieces in there?" he demanded.

"Everything. I ripped the bed to bits, but there isn't a penny in sight."

"You might have saved yourself all that trouble," said Paul. "I told you that I wasn't fool enough to risk my money on this road when there's a safer way to send it ahead."

The leader looked disappointed and he swore roundly.

"Bind that boy's hands behind him and chuck both of those chaps into the wagon," he said.

Paul's hands were secured and he was lifted into the van.

Noah regarded Toby as too big a lift for him to tackle unaided, so he called to the man at the mare's head to dismount and help him.

Toby was then bundled into the van without ceremony.

Noah grabbed the reins, the other man took his horse by the bridle, and, preceded by the leader, they turned off the road a short distance further on and penetrated the silent fastnesses of the range.

CHAPTER III.

PAUL SCOTT BECOMES A BANDIT.

The party left the road far behind them and headed for the heart of the range.

It was rocky traveling for the wagon, which pitched from one side to the other like a water-logged craft in a heavy sea.

Noach didn't seem to regard his job as driver of the van as a sinecure, for he swore every time the wheels gave a jolt and he received an unpleasant bounce on the seat.

As for Paul and Toby, they had an unpleasant time of it inside.

The fat boy recovered his senses soon after the wagon left the road, and the shaking up that he was presently subjected to called forth a variety of complaints from him.

"Quit your kicking, Toby," said Paul, after listening to him in silence for a short time. "Be thankful you're alive and not bound like me."

Toby hadn't noticed that his companion's hands were secured behind his back, and he now regarded Paul's predicament with some astonishment.

"What did they tie you for?" he asked in an unsteady tone.

"To keep me out of mischief, I suppose," grinned Paul.

"They nearly killed me, chucking me headforemost down into the road," groaned Toby, feeling his sore head tenderly.

"It was a brutal act," said Paul. "And I would have taken it out of that fellow's hide if I had been in a position to tackle him."

"Where are they taking us to, Paul?"

"How can I tell? From the jolting we're getting we must be traveling up into the hills."

Toby tried to look out through the rear opening, when the wagon gave a sudden lurch and he was thrown all in a heap among the stuff which littered the bottom of the wagon.

"Oh, oh!" he howled. "I believe I have broken my jaw."

"Not so bad as that, I guess, Toby," answered Paul, reassuringly. "Your jaws are too well padded with fat to be easily dislocated."

"I'll bet I've swallowed a tooth, then."

"What makes you think so?"

"I'm spitting blood."

"What did you hit your face against?"

"I don't know what I hit it against."

Then came another heavy jolt and an oath from the driver.

"Wow!" roared Toby, who had jabbed his nose against the edge of one of the boxes containing the medicine.

After an hour's ride the wagon reached a narrow opening in the hills of a width just sufficient to permit it to pass through without rubbing against the rocks.

This defile, which had all the curves of a snake, admitted the party to a small amphitheater-like retreat in the range.

The rocks rose hundreds of feet all around, shutting in the place on every side.

The only object that relieved the absolute wildness of the spot was an old weather-scarred adobe house, of a single story, whose tiled roof, once a bright brick red, was now a dirty, faded brown.

It had originally been erected by some Mexican fully one hundred years before.

The wagon was drawn up in front of the door and the four horses turned loose to feed on the rich herbage with which the spot abounded.

"Come, now, get out of that, both of you!" roared Noach, sticking his head up over the seat.

"Go on, Toby," said Paul, "and I'll follow you. Be as lively as you can or that chap may treat you to another tumble."

Toby had experienced all the tumbles he wanted for that day at least, and he got out of the wagon as fast as he could.

As he went out backward the seat of his trousers presented such a tempting mark that Noach fetched him a rap with the whip he held in his hand.

Toby gave a dismal howl and slipped down in the grass.

"What did you do that for?" he whimpered, for the lash had stung him like a hornet's tail.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed Noach and the other man, whose name was Kettler.

Paul, who was following his helper, saw the whole thing, and his eyes flashed.

He didn't say a word, for he knew remonstrances would be useless, but he hoped he would get the chance to repay the rascal for his brutal conduct toward the inoffensive fat boy.

"Get up out of that!" cried Noach, flicking the whip about Toby's ears.

Toby got up as fast as his weight would permit him.

The boys were marched into the house and secured in an inner room, which had only a narrow opening in one of the walls for a window.

Entrance and exit could only be had through the main room in front occupied by the three rascals.

Noach immediately began to prepare supper.

They had brought a considerable supply of food from San Luis in their capacious saddle-bags, together with several suspicious-looking flasks that evidently contained whisky.

They talked in loud, rough tones, and the two boys easily heard all they said.

Toby was all broke up, and his full-moon countenance showed every symptom of distress.

His head hurt him, his jaw pained him, and his back bothered him.

It was clear he wasn't accustomed to rough handling, and Paul felt sorry for him.

But as soon as the appetizing smell of bacon and eggs was wafted into their prison, Toby instantly forgot all his ills and began to smack his lips hungrily.

"Doesn't that smell good?" he remarked to Paul. It certainly did, and Paul was forced to admit the pleasant fact.

"Do we get some?" asked the fat boy, eagerly.

"Probably."

Toby applied his eye to a hole in the door, and greedily followed the movements of the cook.

He saw the bacon and eggs, done to a turn, dished out on the rude table on a porcelain dish, and the sight made him ravenously hungry.

If the rascals had only provided themselves with a nice juicy pie the fat boy would probably have had a fit as he watched the bandits devour the spread.

When the last egg and the last piece of bacon had been transferred to the plate of the leader, who was addressed as Murdock, Toby collapsed on the floor, for all his bright anticipations of supper seemed to vanish like dew before the morning sun.

"It's all gone," he said in heartbroken tones, turning toward Paul, who had been trying to figure out the situation.

"What's all gone?" asked Paul, looking at him.

"The eggs, and the bacon, and the bread and everything. They've cleaned the plates and we're not going to have a thing to eat."

"Oh, I guess they'll give us something."

But Toby shook his head in a melancholy way.

"Look and see for yourself," he said, pointing to the hole in the door.

Paul walked over and peered through into the next room. The three ruffians had filled their pipes and were enjoying a smoke.

"You'd better cook something for those young chaps in the room," said Murdock, jerking his thumb over his shoulder. "They must be hungry by this time."

So Noach cooked a couple of eggs and some more bacon, and the sizzling sound and its accompanying smell penetrated the room, and Toby's courage revived.

"Brace up, Toby," grinned Paul. "He's cooking our supper now."

The fat boy could hardly believe the good news until he looked into the room and saw what was going on at the stove.

Presently the door was opened, Paul was unbound and they were told to sit up to the table and help themselves.

There was coffee enough left in the pot to supply them with a full cup each, and it didn't take Toby long to clean up his share of everything in sight.

When Paul had finished, Murdock came up to the table.

"What's your name, young feller?" he asked.

"My name is Paul Scott."

"Well, look here. I'm goin' to make you a proposition. We've got a little affair on hand for to-night, and we want a chap of about your size to help us out. There's a lot of boodle in it, and if you'll jine us we'll give you a share of it, more than you'll make in a year sellin' that medicine stuff, and ter-morrer mornin' we'll let you take yer wagon and go. What d'ye say?"

"Suppose I refuse?" asked Paul.

"We'll tie you two chaps up and leave you here and do the job alone. As we don't mean to come back here no more, the chances are a thousand to one that you both will starve weeks before any one ever finds his way into this spot. So take your choice."

"I'll go with you," said Paul, promptly.

"The fat chap'll remain here till you come after him."

"Oh, lor!" groaned Toby. "Must I stay here all alone?"

"You must," replied Murdock, impatiently, turning on his heel and rejoining his companions, who were standing at the door.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HERMIT-MISER.

"I never thought it of you," said Toby, looking at his companion reproachfully.

"Never thought what of me?"

"That you'd become a robber."

Paul laughed.

"Don't you see that I had to agree to help them out on the job they have in view to-night? A nice thing it would be if we were left here all by ourselves, bound hand and foot, like a pair of chickens, with no chance to get away and nothing to eat—"

"Nothing to eat?" gasped Toby. "Oh, lor'!"

"We'd starve to death before the week was out, and only our bones would be found in this isolated adobe shack, probably months from now. No, I couldn't afford to take that chance, for I saw that fellow meant to carry out his threat if I refused to join him. I'll be watched, of course, but I'm going to spoil their game if I can, and have them all captured and sent to jail, where they deserve to be."

It was now dusk, and Noah came inside, lit a lantern, which he placed on the table, and then ordered the boys to retire into the inner room.

Paul took up his position at the hole in the door which commanded the outer room, and saw Murdock and Kettler come inside, and the three gather about the table, on which Noah had already placed three whisky flasks.

They lit their pipes afresh and began to talk about the expedition they had in view for that night.

"The old fellow's name is Matthew Scraggs," began Murdock, after a preliminary drink and a pull at his pipe. "He lives with a little gal, his niece, I understand, in an old dwelling among the rocks of the seashore within a mile of San Bruno."

"And he's a miser, eh?" said Kettler, eagerly. "Which means that he has a stack of coin hidden somewhere in his house."

"That's his reputation."

"How long has he lived in that place?" asked Noah.

"Five or six years."

"And hain't never been robbed?" exclaimed the ruffian, in surprise.

"I guess not. He keeps his cabin barricaded up, and there ain't but one way to reach it, and that's by way of the beach at low tide."

"Where did he get his money from?" inquired Kettler.

"How should I know? I ain't worryin' how he got it; what's been botherin' me is how to take it away from him."

"I should think it ought to be easy enough if he lives all alone so far from town."

"It isn't easy. His place is strong enough to stand a siege, and he's got a lot of skyrockets on the place ready to shoot off if he's attacked. The people in San Bruno all know about that, and in consideration of his payin' a sum of money to the old adobe church three times a year they stand ready to go to his assistance in case his signals announce danger."

Noah and Kettler looked disgusted.

"How do you expect to get around all these difficulties, Murdock?"

"With the help of this boy fakir we captured this afternoon."

"What kin he do?"

"Don't you see he's got an uncommonly honest face considerin' the business he's in."

"What of it?"

"I expect to gain admittance to that cabin through him."

"How are you goin' to work it?"

"While we stand in the background, he will go to the door with a tale of woe about bein' caught by the tide among the rocks and the impossibility of returnin' to San Bruno afore mornin'. He'll ask for shelter."

"Maybe he won't get it. The miser will have his suspicions."

"We've got to chance that. If we can only manage to get old Scraggs to open his door, no matter how little, we'll be able to force an entrance."

"Suppose this young chap should give us away at the last moment?"

"Not much fear of that, for I shall hold my revolver in

my hand ready to blow his brains out at the first sign of treachery on his part."

"If he does the right thing you're goin' to give him a share of the swag, are you?"

"Yes. That'll make him one of us and prevent him from peachin' afterward."

"How much are you goin' to allow him?"

"That depends on the amount of the haul. If we get ten thousand dollars or more we can give him five hundred. He won't know how much we get, and that'll be a lot of money in his pocket. He can go his way then, and we'll go ours. He'd be a fool to lose such a chance, when he'll never be suspected of a hand in the game."

"When do we start?" asked Noah.

"Oh, there ain't no hurry. The tide won't be low enough for us to get around the point until midnight. San Bruno is only six miles away by a short cut through the range, so we've time enough to take things easy."

"The boy'll ride his own nag, eh?" said Kettler. "We must put a blanket on her for a saddle."

"If this thing pans out well we kin go back to Arizona where we come from and live on the fat of the land."

"That suits this chicken all right," said Noah, with a cheerful grin. "Here's hopin' it turns out to be a gold mine," and the ruffian raised his whisky flask to his lips and took a long pull.

The others followed suit, and they gradually waxed quite merry over the prospect of securing the hidden wealth of miser Matthew Scraggs.

Paul had heard every word almost that escaped their lips, notwithstanding that they spoke kind of low.

But the air was clear and still, and sound carried further than people would generally have supposed.

Toby had fallen asleep with his head against the wall, and on this occasion he wasn't snoring.

The rascals smoked, drank and talked on for an hour, then Murdock announced that it was time they set off.

Accordingly the horses were saddled, Paul's mare being provided with an army blanket tied about her middle.

Paul was called out and the door again secured on the sleeping Toby.

Then the party started off, Paul being compelled to ride alongside of Murdock.

After passing through the defile they set off on a trot toward San Bruno.

There was no moon that night, and the sky was somewhat overcast, which was favorable to the designs of the rascals.

While yet more than a mile away they caught sight of the distant lights of the town that lay upon one corner of San Bruno Bay, under the shelter of a heavy jutting point of land.

It was for the opposite side of the small bay that the bandits headed their animals.

Here lived the hermit-miser, as he was called, in a strongly-built cabin of one story, perched in an almost inaccessible spot among the rocks of the shore.

It could be reached only at low tide, and then by one path alone, so narrow that a single determined man, sheltered among the rocks, could almost have held a regiment at bay.

Matthew Scraggs discouraged visitors, and consequently he was seldom if ever bothered with any.

Rumor said he was the possessor of wealth, which he hoarded merely for the pleasure of counting it over and over for his own satisfaction.

Rumor is more often a liar than not, but in this case Rumor told the truth.

Old man Scraggs was wealthy, and his riches had come to him from the sea.

He had been a fisherman in his time, and made a rather precarious living at the business.

But one night there was a terrible gale off the coast, a vessel in the Australian trade came ashore among the rocks.

All hands were lost, but the best part of the ship was found high and dry in a sandy bit of the shore by Matthew Scraggs next morning.

Thereafter it was remarked that old man Scraggs worked no more on the blue waters of the Pacific, and yet he always seemed to have plenty of money to provide for the simple wants of himself and his little niece.

He ceased to visit San Bruno except when necessity compelled him to, and people believing he had unexpectedly come into possession of considerable money nicknamed him the hermit-miser.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPRINGING OF A TRAP.

The bandits, with their unwilling accomplice, arrived on the beach an hour in advance of low tide, and they had to wait the full sixty minutes before they could traverse the narrow patch of shore left uncovered twice a day for a short time and thus reach the little cove where the miser's habitation was to be found.

Securing the horses in a safe spot they cautiously began the ascent of the rocky path leading to the door of the cabin.

A door and two windows looked seaward, but the windows were so small that no one could have forced a way through them.

The door was also small and stout, and heavily barricaded on the inside.

A dim light was reflected through one of the windows, which showed that, late as it was, the old man had not yet retired to rest.

"Countin' his money, p'haps," grinned Noach in a low voice.

"We'll save him that trouble after this," replied Murdock, with grim humor.

"A feller that don't spend his cash hain't no right to have any," chipped in Kettler. "If everybody hoarded up his wealth there wouldn't be none in circulation."

"Now, young feller, come here till I give you your lesson," said Murdock to Paul.

He proceeded to tell the boy what was expected of him.

"Remember, I shall be close behind you, watchin' everythin' you say and do, so don't try to play any game on us if you value your life, for it won't take more'n a brace of shakes to put a ball into your head if I suspect you tryin' on any kind of crooked business. As I told you afore; if this thing pans out you'll come in for your share of the winnin's with the rest of us, and then you kin light out for 'Frieso, or any other place, with more money in your clothes than you'd make as a travelin' fakir."

Much against his will, Paul advanced to the door of the cabin and knocked.

No notice being taken of the summons, he knocked again, louder than before.

As there was still no stir inside of the house, he thumped on the door for the third time.

The narrow window close at hand was opened and the thin voice of an old man inquired who was there, and what was wanted.

"I'm a boy," replied Paul. "I'd like shelter for the night."

"What are you doing here at this time of night?" asked the old man, suspiciously.

"Drifted into this cove in a leaky boat that went down as soon as I stepped out on the rocks," replied Paul, feeling the cold nose of a revolver under his ear.

"Do you live in San Bruno?"

"Say yes," whispered Murdock.

"Yes," answered Paul.

"Is the tide up at the point?"

"Yes."

"What is your name?"

"Paul Scott."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes," said Paul, as he felt the touch of the cold steel again.

There was silence for a moment or two, as if the old man was considering the advisability of permitting the youth to enter the cabin.

Paul hoped that he would refuse, for he despised himself for being a party to this cruel deception, and yet what else could he do?

These three bandits were desperate rascals, bent on robbing this old man, and if he (Paul) in any way disarranged their plans he felt certain they would shoot him down without the least mercy.

He was simply acting upon the old adage that self-preservation is the first law of nature, hoping that something would turn up later on by which he could redeem his conduct at this stage of the game.

"Come to the door," said the old man at length.

Paul heard Old Scraggs unbarring the entrance.

Presently the door swung inward a few inches, and then stopped, held thus by a stout chain.

A lamp was brought to the crack so that its light fell full upon Paul's face.

The old recluse was studying the boy's features, and perhaps looking beyond him for signs of a second person in the background.

Murdock, however, was foxy enough to keep well in the shade against the wall of the building, while Noach and Kettler held themselves in readiness for an instant dash forward.

Matthew Scraggs, seemingly reassured, returned the lamp to the table, let down the chain and opened the door.

"Come in," he said. "You may stay here till morning."

As Paul stepped forward, Murdock sprang to the door, shoved the boy in ahead of him and seized the old man by the arm.

Noach and Kettler followed close upon his heels.

Matthew Scraggs uttered a shrill cry of terror, which Noach cut off by grasping him by the throat and squeezing his windpipe.

"Tie the old dotard to yonder post," exclaimed Murdock to Kettler, and that rascal immediately seized Scraggs and dragged him over to the end of the room.

As Murdock glanced around the place, which was but meagerly furnished, his gaze lighted on a heavy brass-bound chest which stood beside the table.

He pounced upon it like a vulture swoops upon a fowl.

The key was in the lock, and giving it a quick turn, he threw up the cover, revealing a glittering display of gold and silver coin, all carefully arranged in piles.

The ruffian's eyes blazed with greed.

A package of documents lay on top of the gold, and with an impatient wave of his big hand, Murdock swept it to the floor, carrying with it a score of golden coins that jingled and rolled about on the boards before they came to a rest.

Noach, looking over Murdock's shoulder, was fairly amazed at the amount of wealth which had so easily fallen into their hands.

"I was right," he chuckled, avariciously. "The old chap was countin' his coin. There must be thousands of dollars in that box."

"There's enough to keep us in rhino for a long time," said Murdock, exultantly, running his fingers through the heaps of money, and letting the coins slip like water through his fingers.

"Who'd have thought the old hermit had so much!" said Noach. "No wonder he was called a miser. All hands put on your masks."

This was done, an extra one being given to Paul.

"We'll put it into circulation again," laughed Murdock.

"You kin bet we will," cried Noach, eagerly.

"Go down into the cove where our horses are tied and bring up the saddle bags."

"All right, cap; but I'd like a drink first," his eyes resting on the row of jugs which stood on a near-by shelf. "There seems to be licker to burn in them demijohns yonder."

Murdock's gaze followed the wave of Noach's arm, and his eyes brightened at the anticipation of the treat in store for them.

"Right you are," replied the leader of the enterprise. "Here, Paul Scott," he cried, turning to the lad, who was leaning against the dresser behind the table. "See what kind of stuff is in those jugs on that shelf."

Paul took the three demijohns down, one by one, and removing the stoppers smelt of the contents of each in turn.

Two of the jugs held gin, but very little was left in either.

The third was half-full of whisky.

Suddenly an idea came into his head, and he glanced around to see if either of the rascals was watching him.

They were not.

Their attention was altogether absorbed in the contemplation of the piles of gold and silver coin in the box.

The other ruffian was still engaged in tying up the hermit-miser.

Deftly Paul inserted his hand into an inner pocket, drew forth the bottle of laudanum he had been carrying since he and Toby left Los Angeles, and emptied its entire contents into the whisky jug and shook it up.

He replaced the jugs in their former position and returned to Murdock to report the character of their contents.

Having secured Matthew Scraggs to a post in the rear of the room, the ruffians ordered Paul to bring forward the demijohns of liquor from the shelf in the corner.

Then they proceeded to make merry over their rich haul.

Murdock offered Paul a drink of the gin, which they wouldn't touch as long as the whisky lasted, but the boy said he was not accustomed to strong drink, and retired to a stool under the shelf, whence he watched the rascals narrowly.

Poor old Scaggs, bound hand and foot to the post, was taking on dreadfully over the threatened loss of his money.

Occasionally he glanced at Paul with a look so full of agonized reproach that the boy experienced a spasm of remorse for the part he had acted in the affair, even though he had been driven to do it at the point of a revolver.

"Maybe I'll be able yet to undo the evil I have brought down on this poor old man," he mused. "If there is only enough of laudanum in that whisky to stupefy them, all will be well; otherwise—well, what's the use of worrying? A very short time will tell how this matter is going to end."

At this point of his reflections a door beside the dresser began slowly to open, and as the boy's eyes happened to be on it at the moment, he stared, as it moved on its hinges, with great surprise.

Suddenly a face—the startled countenance of a young and beautiful girl—filled the opening, and her eyes roamed in acute dismay upon the intruders who were making so free with the house.

Paul gazed at this lovely apparition with eyes of wonder. Was this the old man's niece that he had heard Murdock speak about?

CHAPTER VI.

A THRILLING CLIMAX.

As the girl's eyes wandered about the room they finally rested on Paul's face, and she realized that he was observing her.

A look of dread flew into her beautiful face and she looked as if she was about to faint away.

Paul tried to reassure her by placing one of his fingers to his lips and then pointing at the carousing ruffians.

Instinctively she seemed to understand that the boy was not an enemy, and a pleading look came into her eyes, as if appealing to him to do something in behalf of her unfortunate uncle.

Paul nodded to her, and made a motion for her to retire, as he feared if the scoundrels discovered her presence it would complicate matters.

She appeared to catch his meaning and withdrew, closing the door after her.

As the whisky circulated from hand to hand the three ruffians grew more and more uproarious in their conduct.

They seemed to forget everything for the moment but the enjoyment of drink.

The drug was certainly having some effect upon them, but to what extent Paul could not tell.

Finally Murdock staggered to his feet and drawing his ugly-looking revolver fired it into the ceiling.

The other two immediately imitated his example, with a roar of mirth.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Paul, starting up in dismay. "This is more than I figured on. I'm afraid somebody will get hurt."

After firing a couple of shots into the roof of the cabin, Murdock's rum-crazed brain suggested a fresh freak.

He aimed his weapon straight at the helpless old miser.

As he pulled the trigger a sharp, whip-like report came from the door behind him, and he staggered and lurched toward where Paul stood, his revolver flying over to within a foot of the boy.

Paul glanced in a startled way at the door and saw the girl standing in the opening with a smoking rifle in her hand.

She had been just in time to save her uncle's life, for the rascal's aim was disarranged and the bullet flew wide of the post.

Murdock lay squirming on the carpetless floor, his fingers working convulsively and the froth gathering about his mouth.

Noach and Kettler started to their feet with terrible oaths on their lips.

But the effect of the laudanum was now overpowering their senses, and they could hardly see.

Still they could perceive that the shot which had struck their leader down came from behind, and their glazing eyes rested upon the girl with a vengeful rage.

Both raised their revolvers to shoot her down.

Paul, observing her danger, sprang forward, seized Murdock's weapon, and cocking it quickly fired at Noach.

The ball struck the butt of his revolver and glancing off hit Kettler in the mouth.

The pistols of both the rascals exploded harmlessly, Noach's dropping to the floor.

Kettler clapped one of his hands to his mouth with a hoarse yell of rage and pain, and his glittering eyes rested on the belligerent attitude assumed by the boy.

He tried to cover Paul with his weapon, but his hand trembled and wabbled so that it was impossible for him to take aim, and when he pulled the trigger the ball hit the edge of the ceiling.

The girl stepped resolutely into the room now and brought the rifle to bear on Noach, who was trying ineffectually to hold himself upright.

"Throw down your gun!" ordered Paul, advancing on Kettler. "and throw up your hands!"

The pistol slipped away from his nerveless grasp, but he could not throw up his arms.

With an insane look of baffled fury in his eyes the ruffian collapsed against his chair, which went down under his weight, and he lay struggling for a moment on the floor until he relapsed into unconsciousness.

As for Noach, the only remaining scoundrel they had to deal with, he, without being ordered, threw up his arms under the mute persuasion of the pointed rifle.

He remained in that attitude but for a brief interval, his eyes rolling in their sockets, and his body leaning heavily against the table, then he suddenly collapsed as his feet gave way beneath him, and he lay an unconscious heap on the floor.

Murdock was also motionless by this time, but his labored breathing showed that he was not dead, but had yielded to the insidious influence of the laudanum.

The girl dropped the rifle and ran to her uncle, who had been a half stupefied witness of the exciting wind-up.

Paul stepped forward, laid Murdock's revolver on the table, stooped over Neach and drew from its sheath his glittering bowie-knife.

With this in his hand he stepped up to Matthew Scaggs and quickly released him from his bonds. Then he took off his mask.

The old man regarded him with a bewildered expression, the girl with a look of gratitude.

"I thank you for saving us from those dreadful men," she said, earnestly, as she took Paul's hand in hers and raised it to her lips. "You are a brave boy. But how came you to be here with—"

She paused in some embarrassment, as though the situation was not clear to her.

"You deceived me at the door, boy," said Matthew Scaggs, in trembling tones. "You said you were alone, and all the time these villains were with you, and only obtained entrance because I put faith in your honest face. Yet you have now taken sides against them. I do not understand what it all means."

"It means that I was forced to act as I did against my will. Those ruffians had me in their power. I was their prisoner, and they used me to deceive you. When I answered your questions I did so with the cold muzzle of a revolver pressed against my ear. I told you untruths because it was that or death to me. I had to do as I was told or take the consequences. I hope you will forgive me, for I have since done my best to save you. I doctored that whisky with laudanum that I fortunately had in my pocket. And I shot at the two rascals who were trying to get back at this young lady for her nervy act of shooting down their leader."

"I believe you, for your actions speak for themselves and there is an honest ring in your voice," said the old man. "They would have robbed, perhaps killed me, but for you. What is your name?"

"Paul Scott."

"Ah, yes; you told me so at the door before I admitted you. You are a stranger in these parts, are you not?"

"Yes. I am touring Southern California selling patent medicine."

"How came you to be in the hands of these men?"

"I and my companion left San Luis at noon to-day, or rather yesterday, in our wagon, for San Bruno, the village yonder on the bay. We were overtaken and held up on the road by those ruffians, who took a small sum of money from me, all they could find. Then they carried us, wagon and all, to their retreat in the mountain range a few miles back of this place. The wagon and my companion are still there. They had already planned this attack on you. They knew that it would be difficult to gain admission to this cabin openly. So they made use of me to further their purpose, hoping the stratagem would work. It did, but I think the result shows

that after all it was fortunate for you that they brought me along. If you will get some rope we will bind these fellows, and later on we can deliver them over to the authorities at San Bruno. They are desperate villains, and from what I heard about them in San Luis, I guess they have been terrorizing the district. They are now in a fair way to be punished for their misdeeds."

"Heaven be praised!" cried the old man, who had now recovered his self-possession. "You are a brave and sturdy youth, and I thank you once more. You shall stay with us to-night. Indeed, you have no alternative, if the tide be up, as I suppose it is now, for it must have been low when you and these men came here, and that is much more than an hour ago. I will get the rope and help you bind the villains. But they must be carried outside afterward. I could not rest knowing they were within these walls where my money is."

He rushed to the open chest at once, flung himself down before the box and threw his arms protectingly about his wealth.

Then with feverish haste he gathered up the scattered gold pieces from the floor, returned them to the box, together with the bundle of papers, slammed down the lid, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

After that he went for the rope.

"I must say that you are a brave girl," said Paul, looking at the miser's niece admiringly. "I guess you saved your uncle's life by shooting that drink-crazed scoundrel."

She blushed a little and looked down.

"What is your name?" he asked her.

"Suzanne Norwood," she answered, softly.

"It is a pretty name. Almost as pretty as—"

He paused abruptly.

He was going to say "Almost as pretty as yourself," but thought he might offend her.

She blushed rosily as if she surmised what he had thought of saying.

Then Matthew Scraggs returned to the room with a lot of rope, with which they bound the rascals hand and foot with great care.

Without bothering to find out how badly Murdock was wounded they carried the three unconscious ruffians outside and left them stretched upon the ground under the shelter of a huge overhanging rock.

The door was then chained and barred once more, Scraggs, refusing assistance, dragged his precious box into an inner room, and Paul was handed a blanket on which to lie for the rest of the night.

CHAPTER VII.

SUZANNE GIVES AN EXHIBITION OF MARKSMANSHIP.

It was broad daylight when Paul awoke.

The brilliant morning sunlight was streaming through the narrow window panes, making a bright pathway across the floor of the living-room.

The door was wide open, so the boy knew some one else was astir before him.

He got up and walked outside.

He saw Matthew Scraggs bending over the still senseless forms of the bandits.

"Good-morning, Paul Scott," said the old man, looking up on hearing his footsteps.

"Good-morning, Mr. Scraggs. How is the wounded man?"

"He is as much alive as the others."

"Where was he hit?"

"The ball passed through his cheek and carried away two of his teeth. He is not seriously hurt."

"Your niece will be glad to learn that she did not kill him."

"He deserved death," replied the hermit, harshly. "I should feel no compunction in ridding the world of such a scoundrel."

"I trust he and his associates will get all that's coming to them after we deliver them to the San Bruno authorities," said Paul.

The old man looked over toward the point.

"It is high tide," he said. "Twill be some hours yet before they can be removed from the cove. Well, let them lie there, like the carrion they are, until the hour comes."

"This is a lonely spot you have chosen for a home," ventured Paul.

"It may seem so to you and others who are accustomed to mix with the busy world, but to me it has charms that I should not part with at any price. Yonder rolls the vast Pa-

cific. I see it in all its varying moods—in calm and in storm; in sunshine and in shadow. I can never be lonesome while I have the sea under my window. It whispers to me its secrets when at rest, and when ruffled it thunders forth its impatience at the barriers which prevent it from reaching up to my very door. The sea and I understand each other, young man—yes, yes, we understand each other."

"The old fellow is a bit cracked, I guess," thought Paul as he listened to the hermit's strange words.

"This morning the ocean is in good humor; you see, it is smiling up at us," continued the hermit.

"Well, I shouldn't care to live in an out-of-the-way place like this, cut off entirely from the rest of the world except twice a day when the tide is low," said Paul.

"Youth has nothing in common with old age," replied Matthew Scraggs. "The world is yet before you, young man, and it looks fair and enticing; but I have passed through it, and have nothing pleasant to remember of it. It has treated me with base ingratitude, and I have no further use for it."

"Well, if I had your money I don't think I'd kick even if the world had gone back on me. I've always heard that the world takes its hat off to the man with the bank account. You seem to have coin enough to enjoy life with the best."

"Money doesn't buy happiness, young man," said Scraggs, solemnly.

"So I've heard; but give me the money and I'll take my chances of being happy," grinned Paul.

"I should find no pleasure in spending money," said the old man. "The pleasure lies in saving it. Every one of my gold pieces is like a valued friend. I like to take them out of the box and talk to them, handle them gently and count them over and over again to see that none have got away. I take a personal interest in each one and would not lose a single piece for the world."

"And when you come to die you've got to leave them all behind you."

"I'll leave them to Suzanne. She will know how to care for them."

Paul grinned, for he guessed she wouldn't let them lie idle in an old brass-bound box, but put them in circulation where they'd earn a decent interest.

"At any rate that's what any sensible person would do; and that girl looks as if she had a level head on her shoulders," thought Paul.

At that moment they heard the silvery voice of Suzanne calling them in to the frugal breakfast she had prepared.

"I am sorry I can't offer you as much as you are probably accustomed to," said the hermit-miser, apologetically; "but we lead a simple life—Suzanne and I. Such as it is, you are welcome to it."

Paul wasn't kicking.

He was hungry, and the spread, which consisted of fresh Spanish mackerel, white bread made by the girl herself, and coffee, looked inviting.

At any rate there was plenty of it and Paul made a good meal.

The miser retired to an inner room after breakfast, leaving the boy and his niece together.

"Your uncle seems to be a curious old man," remarked Paul.

"I am used to him," she replied; "if you knew him better I think you would see him in a different light."

"Are you really contented to stay in this secluded spot, Miss Suzanne?"

"I am contented to be with my uncle," she answered simply.

"With nothing to look at but the ocean and a lot of black rocks?"

"I have my books, and my sewing, and my rifle to practise with."

"You like to shoot, then?" said Paul in surprise.

"Yes."

"You are a good shot, I suppose?"

"I can hit a silver dollar nine times out of ten as far as I can see it," she said, without any appearance of bragging.

"The dickens you can! You're a dandy from Dandyville. You'd make a hit on the stage with that gun of yours."

She smiled as if she did not exactly understand his meaning.

"Shall I show you how I can shoot?" she asked, innocently.

"Sure. I'd like to see a specimen of your marksmanship."

She got her rifle and her cartridge belt, and they went outside.

"Stand yonder," she said, pointing to a spot thirty feet away, "and toss six stones in the air, one after the other."

Paul took his stand and fired up the stones in succession. As they fell he rattled six times in rapid succession, and every bullet hit a stone.

"That settles it," said Paul, after he had seen this marvelous exhibition of shooting. "You can beat anything in that line I ever saw."

"Here is another stone," she said, picking one up. "Dare you hold that on the back of your hand at thirty feet and let me shoot it off?" she asked with a provoking little smile.

Paul looked rather dubiously at the stone, for it was rather a small one; then he looked at Suzanne, and the confident expression on her face reassured him.

"I take your dare," he said, taking his former position and holding out his hand, back upward, with the stone on it.

It seemed to him that she had hardly time to take aim when the rifle cracked and the stone was brushed off like a flash.

"Gee whiz! She's a beaut," he breathed. "I'll give her one more test."

He took a match from his pocket and held it up.

"Can you see that?" he asked.

She nodded.

"I'd like to see you hit it," he said.

She smiled at the challenge, sighted the mark for an instant and fired.

The match was torn from his fingers.

"I take my hat off to you, Miss Suzanne. You've got some of our expert rifle shots beaten to a standstill."

"Come with me now," she said. "The tide is on the ebb, and I am going to signal the town."

"Signal the town?" exclaimed Paul. "How?"

She led him into the cabin, and by a short ladder to the roof.

The back of the house stood against a perpendicular cliff perhaps sixty feet high.

From a deep hole in the rocks she drew out a big rocket.

Jabbing the wooded end into a crevice of the rocks she sent the rocket in the direction of San Bruno and touched it off with a match.

It shot up into the air with a rushing sound and was instantly lost to sight, but presently a distant report was heard, and then Paul saw a dense cloud of black smoke spread out low down in the air.

A second rocket followed the first, with a similar result.

"There," she said. "That will bring a dozen men from town to see what's the matter here. We will give those three bandits time to get away to be taken to San Luis for trial."

"It's as good as a telegram, almost," snickered Paul.

At the time the tide was at its lowest ebb again the men in San Bruno were seen coming around the point on horseback.

Following their horses in the cove below they came up to the cabin.

"What's the trouble?" asked the foremost, addressing himself to Suzanne.

Matthew Scraggs made his appearance and recounted his recent experience with the three bandits about midnight.

Paul then told his story, from the moment he and Toby were left up in the cabin the previous afternoon.

"What have you done with the rascals?" asked the man, looking furiously.

The old fellow led the party to the back of the cabin and showed the three scoundrels, who were now beginning to come back to their senses.

"The rascals who have been making life miserably for the country oh!" said the spokesman of the party. "Well, we'll take care of them, never fear. You'll all have to come to San Luis to give evidence against them. We'll take them there early to-morrow, and the judge will hold the examination in the afternoon. That will give you time to get there. I expect to see you, Matthew Scraggs, with your niece, at the San Luis Hotel, at one o'clock. And you, young man," turning to Paul, "don't bring your friend, and appear at the examination at two o'clock. Do you understand?"

"All right," answered Paul. "I'm going to start for the San Luis Hotel at once to receive my companion in his usual quiet situation. He is probably in a hole somewhere this time; but it will be a couple of hours before I shall be able to reach the spot."

Matthew Scraggs was silent.

He turned to San Bruno till the rascals on their horses were out of sight, and his party rode good-by, promising to meet next day in San Luis, then he followed

the party around the exposed beach at the point and shortly afterward parted from them and headed for the mountain range.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIBULATIONS OF TOBY.

Paul made all the haste he could to get back to the bandits' retreat in the hills, for he knew that Toby on awakening and finding himself alone in the adobe house, bound hand and foot as he was, would be badly broken up.

Although there was plenty of food in the place, the fat boy would be unable to get at it, and thus the gnawing of hunger would be added to Toby's other troubles.

But to find the narrow defile in the mountains was not such a simple matter as Paul had reckoned it.

He had narrowly observed certain landmarks the night before, when he was forced to accompany Murdock and his companions to San Bruno Bay, and consequently he believed that he would have no great difficulty in retracing his route to the defile; but in daylight things looked much different, the landscape was less contracted, and therefore Paul, in spite of his sharp eyes, found himself all at sea.

"This is tough," he muttered. "Here it is all of twelve o'clock. I've been roaming up and down these byways in the hills and I can't, to save my life, find that defile. Those bandits hit upon a pretty secret spot for their headquarters, I am bound to say. Poor Toby! I guess he thinks by this time that he's been left to die of starvation in that old house."

Paul was getting well-nigh desperate, and the time of day was two in the afternoon, when he stumbled right on the defile at last.

"Thank heaven! I've found it. It's like the answer to a Chinese puzzle, upon my word it is."

He felt immensely relieved as he directed the mare into the defile, and rode along its serpentine course, bordered by lofty peaks and crags, partially covered with verdure, until he emerged into the amphitheater beyond and saw the dirty adobe house right before him.

"Good Anna Maria," he cried to the mare, as soon as he felt the soft ground under the animal's feet. "You'll have a rest and chance to eat your dinner in a moment."

The tired horse picked up her head and led him into a stable where a man carried Paul to the door of the house before which the van stood as it was left the afternoon before.

Paul quickly disengaged himself from the bridle which had saved his master, and turned the animal loose.

Then he entered the house.

He unstrapped the saddlebags that covered the door of the inner room and faced the disconsolate Toby, who was by this time reduced to the dimensions of a pup.

"Oh, don't be afraid, boy," said Paul, "I will give you a good meal. Will you eat? I am very hungry. I'm most starved. My stomach feels like it had caved in for want of something to hold the ribs up. There is no chance for me to get home to San Luis, and I can't believe I shall ever get feeling into them again. Did you feel as comfortable with you as did you get taken from the bandits?"

"I feel as bad as you do, Paul," said the boy, as he cut the cords with the bowie-knife which formerly belonged to Neddy, and laid the leather-bound book and Merrick's revolver.

"In jail! Glory hallelujah!" piped Toby, as he tried to stand up.

He fell back in a heap on the floor, for there was no power in his feet to sustain his weight.

You might have struck his digits with a club at that moment and he wouldn't have felt the blow.

His limbs from his knees down were "asleep" by reason of the partial stoppage of blood circulation.

"Give me a drink of water and something to eat," he begged.

Paul hastened to fetch a jug of water from a nearby spring, and Toby drank about a quart before he removed the jug from his lips.

"Here's a fistful of crackers to chew on till I can get dinner ready," said Paul, handing his companion about a dozen soda crackers.

Toby attacked them ravenously.

Paul started a fire in the little iron fireplace, and while the water was boiling for the coffee he washed the clothes left over from the night before.

Having the water ready, Paul fried a big mess of eggs and

bacon, and spread out the dishes on the table in readiness to serve the meal up as soon as it was ready, for he guessed the smell of the cookery was setting Toby wild inside.

Before dinner was quite ready Toby's lower limbs recovered their usefulness, and he came into the outer room with a famished look on his chubby face.

"Are you hungry?" grinned Paul, giving the pan a shake that started the thin slices of potatoes sizzling again.

"Oh, my, don't mention it," groaned the fat boy, licking his chops at the sight of the food. "I could eat an elephant."

"It's a wonder all that fat you've got on your bones wouldn't stand by you in an emergency like this. You oughtn't to be real hungry for a week."

"Don't you believe it. Paul Scott. My stomach is so empty I can hear it rattle like a bag of bones."

"If I was you I'd get a new stomach," snickered Paul. "Or serve a dispossess notice on that wolf that's inside of you. Your insides give you more trouble than anybody I've ever heard tell of."

"It ain't my fault. I didn't make my stomach."

"I know you didn't. But you ought to educate it."

"Educate it! What do you mean by that?" asked the fat boy wonderingly.

"You pamper it too much. When it hankers for pie, as it always seems to be doing, you're not satisfied till you swallow a whole one down to the last morsel of crust. That's where you make a mistake."

"But I can't live without pie," objected Toby, dismally. "Pie is the finest thing made. Just think of a nice, fat, juicy pie! Oh, my! What did you speak about it for? It makes my mouth water to think of all I've ate."

"Then don't think of them. Sit up to the table and try some of this bacon and eggs, with fried potatoes, and a loaf of white bread. Those rascals laid in a good supply of eatables, and drinkables, too," as he glanced at a row of yet unopened whisky flasks which stood on a shelf in a corner.

Toby needed no second invitation to dinner, and the way he went at the food was a caution.

"You seem to be laying in a week's supply so as to be sure you'll have enough," chuckled Paul, who was pretty hungry himself.

Toby was too busy to make any answer.

"Here's a cup of coffee," said Paul. "Don't choke yourself, now."

Nothing more was said until everything on the table had vanished from view, including the entire contents of the coffee pot.

"Now, we'll take a short rest and then go on to San Bruno," said Paul.

Toby looked the picture of contentment as he reclined on the grass in the afternoon sunshine and listened while his companion recounted the events through which he had passed since he had been separated from the fat boy.

"Ain't I glad to know those chaps are in the calaboose," said, Toby. "Especially that villain who took pleasure in abusing me. I wish they'd tie him to a post and let me tickle his legs with a whip-lash. Wouldn't I just lay it on till he danced? Oh, no; of course not."

"We've got to return to San Luis to-morrow to testify against them," said Paul.

"I'll tell the judge how that fellow treated me. I hope he'll git forty years at least."

"Forty years!" snickered Paul. "Why don't you say life and be done with it?"

"He ought to be sent up for life, and the other two get thirty years apiece."

"They'll get all that's coming to them, I guess."

Paul got up and went to the wagon, let down the back and got inside.

"Look at those mattresses," he said, throwing them out on the ground. "Noach hacked them all to pieces in his search for my money."

"They're ruined," replied Toby.

"I believe half my supply of cough mixture is gone to pieces," said Paul, bringing out one of the boxes.

He found and threw away more than a dozen broken bottles of the elixir of life, and upon examining a second box he found as many more damaged bottles of the stuff.

The third box had not suffered, and only one bottle was discovered to be broken in the fourth and last box.

Paul then replaced their clothes and other personal belongings in the trunk, and cleaned out and tidied up the inside of the van as best he could.

Then he went after the mare and harnessed her to the shaft again.

"Now we'll start on, Toby," he said.

The fat boy, before he got up on the seat, entered the house and took possession of what remained of the bag of crackers, which he stufled into his pockets.

"Get up, Anna Maria," chirruped Paul, and the outfit started for San Bruno.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

Paul, Toby and the covered wagon reached San Bruno some time before dark, and stopped in front of the smaller of the two hotels in the place, while the boys went in and had their supper.

Subsequently Paul drove the van to the corner of two of the principal streets, and after attracting a crowd by their music, the lad started in to sell his patent remedies.

He drove a brisk trade until buyers got scarce, and then he closed up for the night and drove off into the suburbs, where, after tethering Anna Maria, the two boys turned in on a couple of new mattresses which Paul had purchased.

Murdock and his companions had been committed to the town lock-up pending their transfer to San Luis, the county seat, where they would be tried.

The San Bruno jail was a one-story adobe building, with a single barred window and a heavy wooden door reinforced with stout iron bands.

It was plenty strong enough to hold ordinary malefactors, and no one had ever been known to escape from it.

When the jailer locked the big door on the three bandits he was satisfied they were secure until they should be wanted.

They had been searched after the usual fashion, and everything found upon them taken into the jailer's office next door.

There were some things on their persons that were not taken, because the search was not thorough enough.

Each of the rustians had concealed in his trousers a pair of fine, highly tempered files, which they had provided for just such an emergency as the present.

When the jailer carried in their supper to them, and a blanket for each to lie upon through the night, he was perfectly assured that he would find them there in the morning.

When he returned in the morning with their breakfast the adobe jail was empty.

The three stout bars at the window had been sawed away, and that showed how they had made their escape.

The jailer was certain they had had assistance from the outside, for how could they saw through those bars without the necessary tools?

Which went to prove that he didn't know everything.

However, they were gone, and the jailer had a bad quarter of an hour trying to explain to the justice that he wasn't to blame for their escape.

A posse of armed citizens was organized to scour the range after them, and as it was known that Paul Scott, the "medicine man," knew where their retreat was, he was persuaded to accompany the pursuers.

Toby Titmarsh was left in charge of the wagon and the mare, with a fine large apple pie to keep him company.

He ate the pie, and then, feeling drowsy, went to sleep.

In the course of a couple of hours the uneasy movement of the wagon woke him up.

He was surprised to find the van in motion.

"Paul must have got back, harnessed up and started on the road again," he thought, without taking the trouble to open his eyes, for if there was anything Toby liked it was to be left alone to slumber as long as he chose.

A fly lighted on his nose and he strove to brush it away with his hand.

But he couldn't raise his hand—something seemed to hold both of them down.

He opened his eyes quick enough now, and, to his surprise, not to say consternation, he found that his hands were bound by a rope which passed around his waist.

"What's the meaning of this?" he gurgled. "I suppose Paul has been playing a joke on me."

Here he was treated to another surprise.

A very pretty young girl was seated on Paul's mattress, opposite to him.

Her hands were bound behind her back, and then bound to one of the hoops which supported the canvas cover of the van, and a piece of cloth covering her mouth was tied at the back of her neck.

Toby looked at her with the utmost amazement, and as she was wide awake she returned his stare.

The fat boy couldn't understand what this all meant.

How came this girl, bound and gagged, in the wagon?

Surely Paul Scott wasn't engaged in the kidnaping business.

Naturally he turned his eyes to the wagon seat in search of Paul.

The flap exposed a hairless countenance he had seen before, and under circumstances not to his liking.

It was the face of Noach, the rascal who had amused himself on the previous day at the fat boy's expense.

"Oh, my!" gasped Toby, collapsing against the side of the wagon. "The bandits have got hold of me again. I'm a dead Tittmarsh this time for sure. They won't do a thing to me now, I'll bet four bits. Why did I go to sleep? Paul told me to keep my eyes skinned. If I had done as he ordered me to I might have escaped this awful situation. Oh!"

The groan Toby uttered reached Noach's ears, and he thrust his ugly countenance into the wagon.

"You've woke up, have you, you bundle of fat?" he chuckled. "Well, don't let me hear another sound from you until further notice, or I'll go in there and tickle your ribs with my whip."

Satisfied he had terrified his stout prisoner, he resumed a conversation he was carrying on with Kettler, who shared the seat with him.

Toby turned his attention once more to the girl opposite.

It was evident now to him that the bandits had made her a prisoner for some purpose, and he felt sorry for her.

She put him in mind of Paul's description of Suzanne Norwood, the hermit-miser's niece—the girl who could shoot pebbles and matches out of a person's hand at thirty feet.

It was too bad this girl was gagged, for it would relieve the monotony of his position if they could only talk together.

Under the circumstances that seemed to be impossible.

Finally, after they had looked at each other for some time, Toby thought he'd speak to her anyway.

"You're a prisoner, ain't you?" he asked in a low voice, fearful that Noach might overhear him and come in and execute his threat.

The girl nodded.

"Did the bandits carry you off from San Bruno?"

She nodded again.

"You don't know where these men are carrying us to, do you?"

She shook her head.

"They ran off with this wagon while I was asleep. This van belongs to Paul Scott and—"

She nodded her head energetically.

"I wonder what she means by that?" thought Toby, looking at her closely. "She nodded her head when I said Paul Scott. She can't know him. How could she? You don't know Paul Scott?" he asked her questioningly.

She nodded.

"You do know him?" in surprise.

Another positive nod.

"It can't be that you are Suzanne, the hermit's niece?" he asked again, as the possibility of the thing occurred to him.

She nodded.

"Are you the girl that can hit a flying pebble every time with a rifle ball?" he continued, regarding her with a fresh and admiring interest.

She nodded, and seemed to smile.

"Cæsar's ghost!" he ejaculated. "And you shot that man Murdock, the leader of the three bandits?"

Another nod from the girl.

"And they've kidnaped you to get square with you, I suppose."

Suzanne, for it was indeed she, made no answer to this—probably because she could not speak and tell Toby that the real reason why she had been carried off by these rascals was because they hoped, with her as a hostage, to make terms with the old hermit, involving the transfer to them of most of his wealth in return for her liberty.

This was the truth, and Suzanne had easily guessed it.

From the rough movements of the wagon Toby judged they were somewhere among the hills, and he wondered if the rascals were returning to the adobe house behind the defile in the range.

He also wondered what Paul would do when he came back to San Bruno and found himself and the hermit and wagon."

Early the disappearance of Suzanne would result in a

search party being sent out to rescue her, and then he, too, would be saved.

At this point in his reflections the wagon came to a rest in the middle of a shallow stream to allow the horse to take a drink.

Noach handed the reins to Kettler, and to Toby's dismay turned around and came into the wagon.

"Now, young lady," he said to Suzanne, "I'll relieve you of that gag."

Thus speaking, he took the cloth from her mouth.

She felt immensely relieved, but she didn't thank him just the same.

He cast a sardonic look at Toby and then returned to his seat.

The wagon moved on, and thereafter the road became more rough, and the joltings more frequent.

Toby and Suzanne were now able to converse together.

She told him that she and her uncle had arranged to go by the stage to San Luis to attend the examination of the three bandits.

She had left the cove ahead of Matthew Scraggs, and was walking along the shore close to the outlying houses of San Bruno, when she was suddenly set upon by the very rascals she supposed to be safely in prison at San Luis.

They gagged and bound her before she had recovered from the surprise of the attack, and carrying her up the road they came upon the van, with the horse tethered close by, and Toby asleep inside.

"They lifted me into the wagon," she went on to say, "bound you as you slept, put the animal into the shafts and drove off, but in what direction I have not the least idea."

"Didn't any one see them kidnap you?" asked Toby. "I don't see how they could do it in broad daylight."

"If any one saw them carry me off they didn't interfere."

"I wonder what they intend to do with us?" said Toby, apprehensively.

"I am sure they mean to hold me a prisoner until I am either rescued or my uncle pays them a large sum of money to let me go."

"Maybe Paul Scott would pay them something to let me go, too," said Toby, hopefully.

"It's more likely," she said, leaning over and whispering, "that he'll head a party of San Bruno people to run these bandits down and take us away from them. He's a brave boy, and a smart boy, too, and that's just what I think he'll do."

Toby sincerely hoped that Paul was already on their trail, for a sensation of discomfort in the region of his stomach told him that he was growing hungry again.

CHAPTER X.

PAUL STARTS TO THE RESCUE OF SUZANNE AND TOBY.

If the bandits were going back to their retreat in the range, they were taking a different and much longer route than the customary one.

Then again there were only two of them—Murdock was missing.

The truth of the matter was, after giving directions to Noach, he had remained in the neighborhood of San Bruno for two reasons; the first was to communicate his intentions and terms to Matthew Scraggs; the other, to find out if the people of the town were going to make any great efforts to try and recapture him and his two associates.

Immediately after the abduction of Suzanne, Murdock, with a dollar in his pocket which Noach had taken from Toby's pocket, entered a small drug store which sold stationery, and buying a sheet of paper and an envelope, wrote a note in his peculiar style to Matthew Scraggs, in which he stated that his niece Suzanne was now in their hands, and that he would give Scraggs the chance to ransom her for the sum of \$20,000.

"I'll give you a week to make up your mind," the note went on. "If within that time you do not bring the sum mentioned in gold to the spindle rock at the foot of the twin peaks near the road to San Luis, and come alone, you will never see the girl again, as I shall shoot her in revenge for the wound she gave me in your cabin. If you comply with this demand, and bring the money in the manner stated, then the girl will be allowed to go back with you unharmed. If you think you can save the girl by sending a posse to search the range for us, why, try it; but remember that in that case the girl's fate will lie at your door."

"I guess that will give him a scratch," muttered Mr.

dock, as he sealed the envelope and addressed it to Matthew Scaggs.

Then he walked boldly up the main street of the town, entered the small post-office, bought a stamp and mailed the letter.

Before dark the posse, with the deputy sheriff and Paul Scott at their head, which had been scouring the range since morning to find some trace of the three bandits, returned unsuccessful from their quest.

Murdock saw them ride into town, and he smiled sarcastically as they swept by his hiding-place on the outskirts of San Bruno.

He followed them into town in the gathering dusk and saw them dismount before the office of the jail, and enter the building.

A crowd gathered around the door to hear the news, and Murdock mixed with it without attracting notice.

Finally he took advantage of the general attention being concentrated on the office to unhitch the deputy sheriff's fine roan stallion, and walk it down the street a little way.

Then he mounted the animal and rode away from the town to meet his companions at the appointed rendezvous in the range.

There was the dickens to pay when the deputy sheriff missed his horse, with a fine pair of revolvers in the holster.

No one had noticed the disappearance of the animal, and so the town official was left completely at sea in the matter. He was mad as a hornet, for he thought one of his friends had played a practical joke on him.

But a similar discomfiture awaited Paul Scott when he went to the spot where he had left Toby in charge of the van and the mare.

Toby and the outfit were gone, but where it had vanished to no amount of investigation on Paul's part gave the slightest clew.

So Paul had to give the matter up for the night and go to the hotel where he and Toby had taken their meals.

Next morning Paul started out on a fresh hunt after the wagon.

It was not long before a woman, living in the suburbs of the town, told him that she had seen a van such as he described, drawn by a horse answering to the appearance of Anna Maria, driven by a smooth-faced, rough-looking man, with a bearded companion, moving rapidly up the road to the northeast.

"When did you see the wagon, ma'am?" he asked.

"About noon, yesterday," she replied.

"By George!" exclaimed Paul. "I believe those rascals have taken possession of my rig again. They must have been hanging around this neighborhood while we were searching for them in the range. But why should they take the trouble to carry off poor Toby? Possibly to prevent him from giving an alarm. They'll probably dump him out in the wilds somewhere, and let him find his way back to San Bruno as best he can. The rascals! What shall I do now? Without my outfit I'm completely stranded. No use talking. I must follow those scamps, even at the risk of my life. All my money is hid away in that wagon, and I can't afford to be done out of it. I must borrow a good horse and a rifle. I'll run down to the cove and ask Suzanne to loan me her gun. She'll do it, I know. Then as to a horse, I guess I can scare one up when I explain why I want it."

Having decided on his line of action, Paul hurried over to a point, wondering whether the tide was low enough to permit him to walk around to the cove.

He found that it was.

On his way around the little patch of beach he met the postmaster's son, who had been sent to deliver Murdock's letter to Matthew Scaggs.

Paul had scarcely caught sight of the cabin, perched among the rocks, before he saw the old hermit come out of the door and walk up and down in front of the house like a man who had lost his senses.

"What's the matter with him?" the boy asked himself, as he watched the apparently tearing his hair and acting like mad. "The man is subject to fits. Well, I don't wonder. The old cabin is half crazy, between his money and the solitude of the place. The way he talked yesterday morning about the sea, and him, if understanding each other is enough to prove he's cracked in his upper story."

Matthew Scaggs paid no attention to the approach of Paul Scott.

The boy ran his way up the pathway to the cabin and entered at the door, thinking to see Suzanne, but she wasn't there.

Then he walked up to the hermit and spoke to him.

The old man stopped and stared wildly at the boy for a moment, then he seemed to recognize him.

Paul saw he was greatly agitated, the tears were trickling down his pointed beard, and he was shaking as with the ague. In one trembling hand he held an open letter.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the boy, much astonished at his strange actions and appearance.

"Suzanne is gone!" cried Scaggs with a burst of grief, which showed how much he was attached to his young relative. "Gone! Gone! Stolen by those villains!"

"Suzanne gone! Stolen! What do you mean?" gasped Paul.

"Read this letter!" exclaimed the hermit, thrusting the paper into the boy's fingers. "Read it, and you will understand all."

Paul read the letter.

He was startled by the terms proposed by Murdock.

"I must sacrifice my money to save her!" cried the old man, with a hollow groan, that showed it was like parting with his very life blood to be compelled to give up so much of his cherished wealth.

Yet it was clear, to his credit, that his niece was more to him, when it came to the pinch, than even his darling gold, though it was quite probable he never would recover from the loss of his money.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Scaggs, and let us talk the matter over together. Perhaps something can be done to rescue Suzanne from the clutches of those villains, without you being obliged to yield to their terms."

"No, no!" ejaculated the hermit. "Nothing must be done. He says if I send a posse to search for them her fate will rest at my door. In that case he means to kill her, and I cannot lose Suzanne. No, no; I cannot lose her! Better that my gold, which I am saving for her, that she may be rich after I am dead, should go. She must not be hurt."

Paul's respect for the hermit-miser went up several hundred per cent. on hearing him speak in that strain.

"Look here, Mr. Scaggs, don't get so excited. He gives you a week to decide what you will do, and it will take you only a few hours to carry the necessary sum to the spot he has indicated on the road to San Luis. In the meantime, turn this matter over to me. Those rascals have stolen my horse and wagon, and carried off my companion, and I mean to get my property back if I can. In seeking for my outfit I may come across Suzanne, and I promise you I will attempt her rescue even at the risk of my life. I came over here to borrow her rifle. Will you let me have it?"

"Yes, yes," cried the old man, eagerly. "Do you mean to go out alone?"

"I do. They will be on the lookout for a posse, and not for a lone boy like me. I mean to hunt the range till I get wind of their whereabouts, and then I hope by stratagem to get the better of them."

"You are a brave boy," said Matthew Scaggs, patting him on the shoulder. "I have confidence in you. I will wait six days for you to do something. On the seventh, if you do not return with Suzanne, I will take the gold to the spindle rock near the San Luis road."

"That is just what I was about to propose—that you give me six days to rescue Suzanne. It is settled, then?"

"Yes, yes; it is settled," replied the hermit, feverishly.

"Then get me her rifle and some cartridges, and I will be off before the tide makes me a prisoner in this cove."

Matthew Scaggs hastened into the cabin and soon returned with Suzanne's rifle and her cartridge belt, which was full of ammunition.

The gun was a magazine rifle, and six shots could be fired before it was necessary to reload.

Paul strapped the belt around his waist and his gun, where he already carried Murdock's revolver on one side and Noah's bowie on the other.

With the rifle in his hand he looked to be prepared for almost any kind of an emergency he was likely to run up against.

Then seizing Matthew Scaggs by the hands, he told him to keep up his courage.

"Depend on it, I will save Suzanne if the thing be possible. Good-by."

He ran rapidly down the narrow path to the sea, and leaped through the first tide of the surf, and so started for San Bruno to follow a lone

CHAPTER XI.

PAUL TRACKS THE BANDITS TO THEIR NEW RETREAT.

Paul Scott succeeded in procuring a stout young horse, used to mountain travel, and filling a pair of carpet bags with a week's supply of food he set off toward the defile in the hills.

He hoped to find the bandits back again in their retreat.

He took a roundabout course at a slow pace, for he did not propose to take the chances of entering the little enclosed amphitheater until after dark.

There was a beaten track leading well to the north of the defile, and he followed it.

About five o'clock he reached the very creek the wagon had crossed the previous afternoon, and as the ground was soft hereabout he noticed the impression of the wheels.

His heart gave a jump.

"I guess I've struck the right trail," he breathed. "Some wagon, probably my van, has recently come this way."

For some distance the track was more or less plain, then he lost it over a stretch of hard ground.

He went straight on, and by and by saw the occasional track of the wheel again.

They led him around in a semi-circle, and away from the defile.

"I guess they're afraid to go back to their old roosting-ground for a while, at any rate. This track leads right into a wild section of the mountains. Rather rough traveling for a wheeled vehicle, I should think."

It certainly was, as rocks and tree stumps, and other obstructions, abounded.

"They're liable to break an axle over this road unless they're mighty careful."

Darkness came down upon him while he was still following the trail.

He then decided to camp where he was for the night.

Picketing the horse where he could get at the grass, Paul ate his supper of cold meat and bread, which he washed down with coffee he had brought in a bottle.

He sat for an hour with his back against a big rock and figured upon what he should do when he overhauled the rascals.

Then wrapping himself in the blanket he carried for that purpose, he was soon fast asleep in the solitude of the range, with the broad canopy of heaven above him and the stars twinkling down to keep him company.

He was up at the first blush of day in the eastern sky, leisurely ate his frugal breakfast, and saddling his animal took up the trail once more.

It was not an easy matter to follow it here, and he was obliged to proceed a good deal by guesswork.

But he had a sharp pair of eyes, and being desperately in earnest, he noticed signs showing the late passage of a wagon that he would not otherwise have taken note of.

As the day grew apace he saw that the ruffians' trail led around toward the south.

In following their tracks he circled a great spur in the range and came into a long and narrow valley between two sections of the mountains.

Here a wagon could proceed with tolerable ease and safety, and as the ground was of a yielding nature the double wheel track of the van was plainly recognizable.

In order to attract less attention in case the rascals might be somewhere on the watch, Paul dismounted and led the animal by the bridle.

Thus he crossed the long valley to the further end and there noted that the wagon track led through another defile very similar to the one on the other side of the range.

He followed it with due caution, and it led him into a pocket that had many of the characteristics of the amphitheater where the adobe house was situated.

It was very much smaller than the other place, however, being scarcely more than two hundred yards across to a point where a rough pathway led up to a depression among the hills.

Near the center of this pocket Paul saw his van, while Anna Maria and another horse were contentedly nibbling the dry, light grass close by.

"So I've tracked these rascals to their hiding-place, have I?" he muttered gruffly, as he drew back into the shadows of the cover. "Well, I've done better than I expected in such a time."

Looking more narrowly toward the wagon, in the hope of seeing either Toby or Suzanne, he made out the forms of two of the three bandits stretched out in the grass under the van, smoking cigars and apparently talking.

"Where is the third man?" mused Paul. "He may be on the watch somewhere about here. I must look out that he does not come on me unawares."

He looked furtively back up the defile.

There were a score of places where a watcher might lie concealed, and he began to wonder if his approach was already known to the invisible bandit, who he knew to be Noah, as the other two had hair on their faces.

Paul stood for half an hour alternately watching the smokers and looking up the defile, but nothing occurred to indicate that he had been seen.

"I must find some place to picket my horse where he will not be seen," said the boy to himself. "Some place on the other side of the valley. I can then come back here and watch these chaps to better advantage. If the rascals only knew my eyes were on them at this moment they wouldn't be taking things so easy."

He led his animal back through the mountain pass, narrowly watching every rock or bit of brush that might conceal a spy, until he reached the valley once more.

Then he continued on across the narrow plain till he made out a sequestered nook sheltered by a line of trees.

Here he tethered his horse, and here beside a trickling rill he ate his noonday meal, and laid his plans for future action.

The day was very warm and the air still.

Nature seemed to have gone to sleep under the broiling Southern California sun.

Paul recrossed the valley and entered the defile once more.

He passed through to the point from which he had previously reconnoitered the pocket, and creeping into a mass of thick vegetation near at hand he felt he was secure from observation.

He saw that he had not reached the spot a moment too soon, for one of the two bandits, whom he recognized as Murdoch, was slowly walking toward the entrance to the pass.

"I had a narrow escape," thought Paul, his eyes on the man. "Had I come a few moments later we must have met in the defile, and then there would have been something doing. I wonder where he is going?"

Murdoch kept right on till he reached the defile, passing within a yard of where Paul was concealed, and then disappeared up the pass.

"I suppose he's gone to take a look up the valley, and see if any one is in sight," mused the boy.

It was a good guess, for this was exactly the errand the bandit was bent on.

The other ruffian was stretched out under the wagon as if asleep.

Noah was still missing, and Paul would have given something to have known where he was at that moment.

At that stage of the game the canvas folds behind the wagon seat were pushed back and the fat countenance of Toby appeared.

He looked all around the van as well as he could, and after a moment or two drew back again into the interior.

"I wonder what Toby is up to?" muttered Paul. "Is he planning to make his escape? I'm afraid he isn't smart enough to succeed."

At that moment another face appeared from behind the canvas—the bright and alert face of Suzanne Norwood.

CHAPTER XII.

SUZANNE AND TOBY GET AWAY FROM THE BANDITS.

Paul watched the girl with sparkling eyes.

It looked to him as if she and Toby had made up their minds to try and get away from their captors.

Suzanne glanced around just the same as the fat boy had done.

Then she stepped lightly over the seat, kicked down and gazed under the wagon.

Of course she caught sight of the sleeping Murdoch.

She drew back and said to herself, "The show is over."

Paul saw her eyes turn to the other side of the defile.

Her figure was moving quickly now, and she was running in the grass.

She waited a moment and then waved her arm for Toby to follow.

The fat boy emerged from the van like a baby elephant, and the front of the wagon tipped with his weight as he started to descend backward.

He reached the ground all right and dived down beside Suzanne, but he was so large that he put one in mind of an ostrich hiding its head in the sand while the rest of its body was exposed.

Any one looking that way could have seen him.

Paul watched their movements with a good deal of interest.

They lay in the grass two or three minutes and then Suzanne rose up and looked toward Kettler.

He had not stirred.

Then she scrutinized the pocket on every side, and seeing nothing stirring she spoke to Toby, who also got up, and they started for the entrance of the defile.

"Suzanne," cried Paul, softly, as she and the fat boy were passing within a few feet of where he lay concealed in the bushes.

The girl gave a little, suppressed scream, while Toby exclaimed, "Oh, lor!" and began to shake in his shoes.

"Don't be alarmed, Suzanne. It is I, Paul Scott."

"Paul Scott!" she cried, joyfully, recognizing his voice. "Where are you?"

"Here," and Paul rose out of the bushes.

"Oh, Paul!" exclaimed Suzanne, running up to him and catching him by the hands.

"Paul Scott, is it really you?" gurgled Toby, in astonishment.

"Sure thing, Toby," grinned the lad, as he drew Suzanne down into the shelter of the bushes. "Get under cover, Toby."

In a moment they were out of sight.

"It isn't possible that you came out here after us all alone, is it, Paul?" asked Suzanne, laying her hand on his arm. "Surely, some of the San Bruno people came with you?"

"No, I came here all by myself."

"Why were you so reckless? You know these men would think nothing of shooting you down on sight."

"There was a good reason why I could not bring a posse with me."

"What reason? How could you hope to get the better of these desperate rascals yourself?"

"By stratagem. Murdock wrote a letter to your uncle demanding twenty thousand dollars for your ransom. He said that if any attempt was made to capture him and his associates it would be at the risk of your life. He gave your uncle a week to consider the matter, and bring the money to a certain spot which he stated. If Mr. Seraggs failed to do so, Murdock threatened to kill you in revenge for the wound you gave him the other night in the cabin."

Suzanne, though naturally a courageous girl, shuddered and turned pale, for she believed the scoundrel was fully capable of carrying out his threat.

"Then you have seen my uncle?" she said, in a low voice.

"Yes. I told him that it was better that I should attempt your rescue alone, as these rascals would certainly be on the lookout for a posse, and would take measures to protect themselves against any attack. Doubtless they had determined to kill you before they would be taken. Now I reasoned that I might possibly be able to track the scoundrels alone without attracting their notice. Your uncle thought well of the plan and agreed not to comply with Murdock's demands until I had had a fair chance to do something to thwart the rascal. So I started out on a borrowed horse yesterday morning, and after some hours I came upon the tracks made by the van. I followed them, and they led me here."

"You took a great risk. How brave you are!" she said, admiringly. "But we ought not to remain here talking." she said, anxiously. "The other two men may come back at any moment. Let us get away at once through the pass."

"No," replied Paul. "Murdock passed through the defile about half an hour ago. If we went that way now we would be likely to meet him. He is armed and one of us at least might get hurt. We must wait till he comes back."

"And the other man—the one called Noah?" asked Suzanne. "Have you seen him?"

"No. I wish I knew where he was."

"Why you have my rifle, haven't you?" she remarked in surprise.

"I have. Perhaps you'd better take it. I have a revolver and a pistol."

He persuaded Suzanne to take her weapon, which she knew how to use so well, and unbuckled the cartridge belt.

"Considering that you are a dead shot I think we are a match for the rascals as we stand. However, the easiest way is the best. I would much prefer that we made our escape without shedding any blood."

While they conversed they also did not forget to peer frequently through the interstices of the bushes in order to keep track of anything that transpired in the open space in front.

Suddenly Suzanne grasped Paul by the sleeve of his jacket.

"Look," she said. "There is Noah."

Paul and Toby followed with their eyes the direction she pointed, and saw the rascal making his way down the rocks at the further end of the pocket.

"He must have been on the watch at that opening yonder," said Paul.

He came on slowly, as if time and he were on easy terms, and when he reached the wagon he sat down and punched Kettler into wakefulness.

They conversed together.

Kettler finally got up and looked around, as if in search of Murdock.

Not seeing any sign of him he sat down again, and the rascals continued to talk together for perhaps a quarter of an hour.

Then Noah rose to his feet, came around to the front of the wagon, stepped up on the seat and looked into the van.

Of course he immediately discovered the absence of the prisoners, and sprang down again in a hurry.

From the way he addressed his comrade it was evident he was blaming him for lack of vigilance.

No time, however, was lost by them in making an effort to recover the fugitives.

After glancing sharply all over the grass-covered pocket Noah started for the defile, while Kettler remained beside the wagon on the alert.

"It's too bad that both of them didn't go off through the pass hunting for us," said Paul. "Then we'd have had the chance to sneak across to that opening over the rocks. Though I suppose that would mean I'd have had to abandon my horse, which is tethered in a grove of trees at the other side of the valley beyond the defile."

At that moment Toby uttered a loud exclamation of terror, and pointed to Suzanne's feet.

A good-sized, deadly-looking snake lay coiled there, its flat head poised and gently waving to and fro as if in the act of springing on the girl.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT PAUL FOUND IN THE SPUR OF THE RANGE.

Paul saw Suzanne's danger, and on the spur of the moment he seized his revolver and fired at the snake's head, killing the reptile instantly.

The report of the weapon naturally startled Kettler, and drew his attention in that direction.

He saw the white smoke rising from the fringe of bushes and he became greatly excited.

His first impression was that the pocket had been invaded by their enemies, and that he had been fired upon, so he hastily jumped behind the shelter of the wagon to get out of range.

He felt that his position was desperate, as he had no weapon to defend himself with—the only guns the party possessed being the deputy sheriff's stolen revolvers, now in possession of Murdock and Noah.

"The fat is in the fire now," said Paul, ruefully. "No use staying here any longer. Let's make a break for that rascal and put him out of business while we have the chance. If he has a revolver, and draws it on us, don't hesitate to shoot him, Suzanne."

Paul sprang from the bushes, pistol in hand, followed by Suzanne with her rifle ready for instant service, while Toby, being neither armed nor very valiant, followed more leisurely, and with many misgivings as to what was about to happen.

"You go around the other side of the wagon, Suzanne, and cut him off that way while I take him in front," said Paul.

Kettler being caught at a disadvantage threw up his hands when so ordered by Paul.

"Here, Toby," ordered his business associate, "you can find some pieces of rope in the wagon to tie him up with."

Toby hastened to get the cords which the rascals had used to bind himself and Suzanne.

While Paul and Suzanne covered the discomfited scoundrel, the fat boy bound his hands behind his back and tied his legs together.

He had scarcely completed the job when Murdock and Noah, who had heard the report of the revolver, came on the scene, weapons in hand.

They stopped at the mouth of the defile to take a hasty survey of the pocket in order to determine the trouble, and it was not many moments before they grew wise to the situation.

They recognized Paul Scott at once, and at the same time saw their late prisoners.

As there was nothing very formidable in the appearance of these three young people, Murdock and Noah concluded that they could easily overpower them.

So they rushed forward with shouts of triumph, both of them firing at Paul as he stood out in full view.

One of the bullets carried away a lock of the boy's hair, and he staggered back and slipped to the ground.

Suzanne, with a cry of anger and distress, covered Noah in a twinkling with her rifle and pulled the trigger.

Simultaneous with the sharp crack of the weapon the scoundrel threw up his hands, uttered a terrible cry and fell forward on his face.

A second report followed an instant later and Murdock went down on the grass like a stricken deer.

By that time Paul was picking himself up.

Suzanne dropped her rifle and ran to him with the deepest concern on her face.

"Are you hurt?" she asked, with trembling lips.

"Not in the least," he replied, with a reassuring smile. "The ball glanced alongside my head and knocked me out for the moment, but that is all it amounted to."

Then as he looked at the fallen rascals a dozen yards away he exclaimed:

"You shot them both, did you? I wonder if they're dead?"

He walked up to Noah and Murdock and examined them.

Each had a streak of blood flowing from a furrow over the left ear.

They had been stunned, but not dangerously wounded.

"I'm rather glad she did not kill them, though they richly deserved such a fate," he said to himself. "I am sure Suzanne would not like to have their blood on her hands if she could avoid it. She couldn't have made two prettier shots, both exactly alike, without actually killing them."

He returned to the girl's side and reported the facts.

"I did not try to kill them," she said. "I could easily have done that. I hit them just as I meant to do."

"You did all that was necessary to put them in our power," replied Paul, quite pleased with the results of the encounter. "Come, Toby, help me secure those villains before they recover their senses."

There was no more rope, so Paul tore one of the blankets into strips and used that to bind Murdock and Noah hand and foot.

The three bandits were then hoisted into the van like three sacks of meal. Anna Maria was harnessed to the shafts, and with Toby for driver, and Suzanne sitting by his side, the wagon started off through the defile for the valley beyond, Paul riding behind on the deputy sheriff's stolen horse.

After passing through the defile Paul directed Toby to follow him, and he started off ahead for the place where his own animal was picketed.

It was well along in the afternoon, and as both Suzanne and Toby were about half famished, for the bandits had secured only a limited quantity of food, Paul called a halt for an early supper, which he supplied from the eatables he had brought with him.

"Eat heartily, Toby," grinned Paul, handing his young associate a couple of meat sandwiches after he had first waited on Suzanne. "I guess I have enough to fill you up."

"Thank you very much," gurgled Toby, between big bites. "I feel as hollow as a tube. I've eaten scarcely anything since yesterday morning."

"Well, when we get back to San Bruno you shall have the biggest pie I can buy."

Toby smacked his lips in anticipation of such a treat and finished the last morsel of his two sandwiches.

"What?" he asked, holding out his hand.

"You're a second edition of Oliver Twist, aren't you?" said Paul, producing a couple of additional sandwiches.

Toby had no idea who Oliver Twist was, as he had never read the story, so he merely grinned, and bit into his third sandwich.

When the meal was ended, Paul mounted his horse, and, leading the other animal, headed the procession up the valley.

They reached the upper end of the valley about dark and halted there for the night, the young people, with a blanket apiece, making themselves as comfortable as they could under the shadow of a spur of the hills.

Toby and Suzanne were soon asleep, but Paul felt unusually wakeful.

He lay on his back, looking up at the brilliant stars, and thought how delighted the old hermit would be when he returned Suzanne to her home on the following day.

"He's a queer old fellow," mused the boy; "but he's got one good streak in him—he's mighty fond of his niece. I wonder how he made all that money he's got in that brass-bound box? There must be thousands of dollars there. It's a fine thing to have plenty of money. A fellow can have anything he wants then. It will take me a good while to make a fortune selling patent medicine. Still, I'm doing pretty well for a chap of my years. I have no right to kick. All the same, I wouldn't mind if I could find a gold mine, and branch out as a young multi-millionaire. I think I'd start a pie bakery especially to provide Toby with enough of his favorite luxury. Dear me, how that boy can eat! If he keeps on, he'll burst some day, or grow so big I'll have to hire him out to a side-show."

He turned over on his side and began listlessly to pile up the pebbles within reach, thinking that before he had finished the operation he would drop asleep.

The moon rose over the summit of the range and shone down upon the silent little camp.

Presently, as Paul was putting the finishing touches to his pile of stones, something bright in the face of the rock a short distance away attracted his notice.

"I wonder what that is?" he thought, stopping in his occupation. "It looks uncommonly shiny, and different from the rest of the rock. I'm going over to investigate it."

He got up and walked over to the rock spur on which the rays of the moon shone with a soft brilliancy.

That one particular spot reflected a dull radiance different from any other part of the rock.

Paul rubbed his hand over it.

"It's a funny piece of rock," he mused. "I'm going to dig it out as a curiosity."

That was easier said than done.

With the point of his bowie-knife he dug away at it, and finally quite a chunk of the shiny rock came away in his hand.

He examined it in the light of the moon.

"I wonder if that could be real silver ore?" he asked himself, as he turned it over and over in his fingers. "It looks something like the specks I've seen in silver quartz; but this is not quartz, that I can see; it seems a solid lump of silver rock. I dare say there is more of it in that spur. If it's real silver I've accidentally struck a good thing—maybe a bonanza. If it isn't silver, why, then, this hunk hasn't any value. I must get some person who has an expert knowledge of ores to pass judgment on it. If there's anything in this I can easily find this place again."

Paul dropped the lump of rock in his jacket pocket, went back to his blanket, and while thinking over the possibilities of his discovery fell asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

NOW PAUL'S DISCOVERY PROMISES VALUABLE RESULTS.

Paul was up with the sun next morning, and the first thing he did was to take a look at his prisoners.

Murdock and Noah had recovered their senses, and from the vigorous way they showered threats on his head the boy judged they were not much inconvenienced by their wounds.

"We'll make you wish you were never born, you young imps, when we get our hands on you again," snarled Murdock, with a vengeful look in his fierce eyes.

"You won't have that pleasure, I'm thinking," replied Paul.

"The last time I saw you it made me think you'd hold us," roared the other scoundrel, baring fangs.

"The next time you'll be a little more than that," retorted the boy.

"Smarter fellows than you are in jail, and likely to stay there. You won't have another chance to saw yourselves out of the lock-up."

"We've got friends on the outside that'll take care of us."

"I don't believe a word of that. If you had friends you'd have been better armed and provided for than we found you. You only had one horse and a pair of revolvers, and those you stole from the deputy sheriff of San Bruno. You've got nerve enough, and you're bad enough, to do most anything; but the authorities at San Bruno will keep a better watch on you this time, I'll bet. When they land you in San Luis you'll be safe enough, I guess."

Murdock received this speech with a volley of expletives.

Paul was disgusted and left them to themselves.

After a light breakfast, in which the rascals did not participate, as Paul did not care to take the chance of unloosening even one of their hands, the journey to San Bruno was resumed.

Paul picked out an easier route than that taken by the bandits on the way to the heart of the range, and about the middle of the afternoon they came in sight of the town and the great ocean beyond.

When they drove up to the office of the jailer alongside of the jail, a crowd immediately collected.

He found that the deputy sheriff was absent with a posse on a still hunt for the escaped prisoners.

The jailer was the most surprised man in town when Paul notified him that he had the three rascals in the van ready for delivery to him.

"Why, when did you go out after them, and who went with you?"

"I went alone the day before yesterday."

"You went alone! Oh, come now, what are you giving me?" replied the jailer, incredulously.

"I'm giving you nothing but the truth. You know I reported to you that my wagon and my assistant were missing, don't you?"

The man nodded.

"Well, I discovered that the bandits had taken the van, carrying off not only my helper, but Suzanne Norwood, old Matthew Scraggs' niece."

"What!" exclaimed the jailer. "They carried off the hermit's niece?"

"That's what they did."

"This is the first I've heard about it."

"Mr. Scraggs did not report the matter for reasons he considered good. However, to continue with the facts, I started off on my own hook to see if I could find any trace of the villains, and I succeeded in tracking them to their new hiding-place."

"You did!" ejaculated the surprised official.

I did. I hardly expected to do anything with these fellows. My plan was to aid Miss Norwood and my associate to escape at the first chance, when the rascals happened to be off their guard. This scheme missed fire in the limes originally intended, but it led to a fight with the villains, the upshot of which was we captured the three of them, and I am now ready to deliver them to you."

"I hate to say that I doubt your story," replied the jailer, jumping to his feet and calling two of his assistants; "but when I see the rascals with my own eyes I'll be convinced."

"Then come outside and you'll see them all right."

In a minute the jailer had evidence enough to banish his disbelief.

He was tickled to death at getting his slippery prisoners back again, and you may be sure he lost no time in hustling them back into the prison.

After that he took no further chances with them, but posted a guard outside the window until the return of the deputy sheriff from his unsuccessful expedition, when the bandits were taken under a strong guard to San Luis, and lodged in a strong jail.

In spite of Murdock's boasting, they did not escape a second time, as they tried and convicted were sent to the State prison for fifteen years apiece.

In recognition of Paul's services in achieving their capture the town of San Bruno voted him a reward of three hundred dollars, while the county presented him with the standing reward of two thousand dollars a year.

It was dark on the day that Paul returned with his prisoners to San Bruno, so the tide was low enough for him to accompany Suzanne back to the cabin.

"Paul! It is Matthew!" said Suzanne, as they came in sight of the light burning in the cabin window. "He is suffering a

world of anxiety on my account. How happy he'll be to have me back again!"

"It will be something of a surprise to him to see you back so soon," said Paul. "I left him in a hopeful frame of mind, but I have no doubt he has since had misgivings of the ultimate success of my little expedition."

They ascended the path in the rocks and Paul knocked lustily on the door.

"Who is there?" asked the old hermit, after a moment's delay.

"Paul Scott," replied the boy.

The door was quickly unbarred and unchained.

As it swung open on its heavy hinges, Paul was surprised to see the great change which had come over Matthew Scraggs in the short time since he saw him last.

He seemed to have aged ten years.

His straggling hairs looked whiter than ever, and his deep-set eyes burned like coals of living fire far back under his shaggy, overreaching eyebrows.

He looked thinner than ever, for he had scarcely eaten anything to speak of since the morning he received Murdock's letter and understood the peril which threatened Suzanne.

"You are back, Paul Scott," he said in a hollow voice, which had a strangely pathetic ring in it. "You have failed then to find my little sunbeam—my Suzanne. I feared you would not succeed. Those rascals are too clever to be easily outwitted. To-morrow I will take the money to the spindle rock and—"

"You will do nothing of the sort, Mr. Scraggs," replied Paul. "Suzanne is safe and those bandits are in jail."

"Suzanne safe!" he gasped in a fluttering voice. "Are you telling me the truth, Paul Scott?", he asked with plaintive eagerness.

"Yes."

"Then where is she? Where is my little girl?"

Suzanne, who had been standing back in the shadows while Paul was breaking the news to the old man, could curb her impatience no longer.

"Here, uncle. Here I am, safe and uninjured," and she darted forward and sprang into his arms.

Paul stepped into the cabin after her and closed the door.

The old hermit was well nigh overcome by the unexpected reappearance of his niece, whom he loved so dearly, and whose absence under such terrible circumstances had been a sore trial to him.

He seemed hardly to believe the evidence of his eyes, and looked at her in a dazed kind of way.

But the pressure of her warm lips to his, and the twining hold of her arms around his neck, soon brought conviction to his senses, and he caressed her fondly, and thanked her for that she had been restored to him.

"And did Paul save you, my little one? Am I to thank him for this great blessing which has come to me to-night?"

"Yes, uncle. He tracked his wagon, in which the bandits carried us off, far into the wilds of the range. His friend Toby was also in the power of those men. We made up our minds to try and escape from them yesterday, when we thought we saw a chance. But we surely would have been captured but for Paul. He deserves all your thanks, uncle. I shall never forget how good and brave he was to come to my rescue."

The old man at once turned to Paul and expressed his gratitude in heartfelt language.

"That's all right," replied the boy. "Well, it is a fact I did the best I knew how to save Suzanne, and I feel sufficiently repaid in knowing that I succeeded. I don't care to be praised in doing what was scarcely more than my duty."

Paul accepted an invitation to stay there that night.

In fact he had no other course, as the tide had by this time cut off the passage around the point.

Suzanne immediately started in to prepare supper, which was not very extensive, as the hermit had very little of anything to eat in the cabin.

However, they made the best of the situation, and as the girl was about fagged out, she went to her room as soon as the meal was disposed of.

Before Paul spread the blanket which was given him to make a bed of, he thought about the silver-looking stone in his pocket, and drawing it out said, "I wonder what it is."

He examined it attentively.

"Where did you find this?" asked the boy, smiling, in a tone that fairly trembled with eagerness, as he gazed at the boy's face.

"In a certain part of the mountains, just beyond the pass. Do you think it can possibly be real silver?"

"Do I think? Why, Paul Scott, it is silver. A chunk of the pure virgin metal."

"Do you mean that, Mr. Scraggs? Are you certain you are not making a mistake?"

"I am making no mistake. I am thoroughly familiar with metallurgy. This specimen is genuine silver ore. There must be more, tons of it, where you found this. Lose no time, but go back and stake out a claim. Stay, I will go with you and show you how to do it. We must comply with the law, and yet take full advantage of our rights. The discovery is yours, and I will see that so far as my knowledge of surface indications will decide that the cream of this lode shall come to you. After that it is only right that Suzanne and I and your associate should have the preference over strangers, who will flock to the spot as soon as the news of this silver find becomes known. Am I not right?"

"You are, Mr. Scraggs."

Thus the matter was settled, and Paul retired to rest, an excited and happy boy.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SILVER LODGE.

When Paul awoke next morning and went outside to take a whiff of the bracing sea air he found Matthew Scraggs seated before a flat rock cleaning a mess of fish he had just caught.

"You look as if you had slept well, Paul Scott, in spite of the hardness of your bed," remarked the old man cheerfully.

"Like a top," grinned the boy. "Though I must admit that I dreamed I found a mine of solid silver ore, the like of which no man ever heard of."

"Your dream is likely to come true, for that chunk of virgin silver you showed me last night tells its own story. You said you broke that off from the face of the rock."

"I did, night before last, and I am ready to lead you to the spot and point out the place where I dug it out with my bowie."

"It must be a lode of uncommon richness to produce so remarkable a specimen."

"I hope it is. A fellow doesn't get more than one such chance in a lifetime."

"It is only the favored few who even get the one chance. On the strength of that specimen I should say that your fortune is made. I have lived many years in this part of the State, and never before have I heard that silver had been found in that range. Strange that you should be the first to bring the ore to light."

"Oh, I don't know about that, Mr. Scraggs. If it is really there, somebody had to make the discovery. Why not I as well as any one else?"

"True. Are you ready to start to-day for that particular spot in the range where you found the specimen?"

"I am ready any time you are, Mr. Scraggs."

"Then you and I will provide ourselves with shovels and picks, and a week's supply of provisions, and go there alone. Your friend Toby can remain here with Suzanne and keep her company while we are away."

"We will travel in the van, I suppose?"

"Yes. Then we can bring away a quantity of the ore which we can have assayed in San Luis."

"All right. As soon as I can get out of the cove I will make all the necessary preparations for the trip, and will drive up to the other side of the point for you. I suppose I can leave my sack of patent rye flour there, as it would be foolish to carry that stuff with us."

"There is a small cave in the rocks down on the beach where you can store your stuff for the present. It will be quite safe there. But if our expedition pans out as I fancy it will, I don't think you'll have any further use for your stock in trade."

The old man took up the fish and carried them into the cabin, where Suzanne was already up and stirring about, making preparations for breakfast.

An hour after the meal the tide had receded far enough to enable Paul to walk around the point.

He found Toby eagerly looking for his own breakfast.

Hitching Alfonso Maria to the wagon, he first took Toby to the hotel, and then drove to a hardware store, where he purchased the necessary implements for their surface mining operations.

Then he laid in a stock of provisions, with a few necessary cooking utensils.

After that he drove back to the hotel and found the fat boy waiting for him outside.

"Jump up, Toby," said Paul. "You're going to spend a few days at the cove with Suzanne. Her uncle and I are going off into the country on business."

"I don't mind," replied the fat boy; "but I hope you won't forget to buy me a half dozen nice, juicy pies."

"Will half a dozen be enough for you?" grinned Paul.

"Surely it will if you do not stay away longer than a week."

"I will get you the pies at a bakery down the street. From the quantity of pies you consume you ought to be a very pieous boy," chuckled Paul.

"More likely from the rate I eat pies that I should turn a pie-rate," snickered Toby.

"You'd make a healthy-looking pirate, Toby. If I kept a restaurant I'd hire you to carry the banner. I think your appearance would draw custom."

The van drew up near the point, and Paul's trunk and the boxes of cough mixture and salve were transferred to the cave.

Then the old hermit and Suzanne appeared.

"So you and Uncle Matthew are going off into the wilderness somewhere, are you?" she said laughingly to Paul.

"We are bound on a voyage of discovery, Miss Suzanne," grinned the boy.

"I suppose there isn't any use of my asking where you are going? I asked uncle, but he wouldn't gratify my curiosity. He is too provokingly mysterious," she added with a pout.

"You shall know all about it when we come back," replied Paul. "I am going to leave Toby in your charge. I hope you will see that he doesn't overeat himself. I'd advise you to lock those half-dozen pies up, and give him only half of one each day."

"Oh, my!" gasped the fat boy. "Don't do that."

"Don't worry, Toby," laughed Suzanne. "I'll see that you shan't suffer."

"If you spoil him while I'm gone, Miss Suzanne, I'll hold you responsible," said Paul.

The girl laughed and Toby grinned, then Paul and the hermit got on the seat of the van, bade Suzanne and the fat youth good-by, and drove off toward the mountain range.

Paul and Matthew Scraggs arrived at their destination about dark that day.

Next morning after they had made a hasty meal the boy led the old man to the place in the rock spur where he had chipped out the chunk of silver ore.

Scraggs made a careful examination of the spur, and at length announced that the rocks were alive with silver quartz.

"This is the outcropping of a bonanza lode which seems to run straight into this mountain. I see enough ore in sight to make you rich. We will now proceed to mark out your claim according to legal requirements, then we will dig out a quantity of the stuff at different places which we will take to San Luis and have assayed in order to determine its richness. This valley will soon be peopled with prospectors, many of whom will naturally profit by your discovery."

"Well, we can take up four claims, at any rate, and what is left can go to the public," said Paul.

The boundaries of the four claims were accordingly properly defined.

It was subsequently decided that the four should be pooled, and that Paul should be entitled to three-fifths of the results obtained from the claims, and that the hermit, Suzanne and Toby should divide the other two-fifths among them.

That afternoon Paul and Matthew Scraggs attacked the spur with pick and shovel, and obtained specimens of silver ore that promised to assay several thousand dollars to the ton.

"As far as I can determine," said the old man, "this ledge shows phenomenal value. The high-grade streak runs here starting at the foot-wall of the vein. It is several inches wide wherever we have dug into it, and I should say roughly it ought to easily yield \$15,000 to \$18,000 to the ton. There is another streak over here," continued Mr. Scraggs, jabbing his pick into the rock, "that seems to be twelve or fourteen inches wide which we will investigate further to-morrow. It is unusual to discover such rich values right on the surface, and is due to the unusual conformation of the mountain at this point."

They desisted from further work for the day, and spent the remaining hours of the afternoon figuring upon the probable value of the lode, and the best method of turning the rock-imprisoned silver ore into real money.

That night Paul dreamed that the cove was piled high with brass-bound boxes filled with silver dollars, and that every one of them belonged to him.

CHAPTER XVI.

A ROLLING STONE AT LAST BECOMES STATIONARY.

Paul and Matthew Scraggs spent the greater part of a week investigating the silver lode, and then with the van well filled with marked specimens of the quartz they started for San Luis.

These specimens were left at the assay office, and the results awaited with intense interest by Paul.

The two took up their quarters at the hotel Paul and Toby had patronized for their meals when they were in the town two weeks before.

They had nothing to do but wait for the report of the assay office.

"By the way, Mr. Scraggs," said Paul on the afternoon of their arrival in town, "do you mind telling me why you went to live in such a lonesome place as the cove?"

The question seemed to startle the old man at first, and he regarded the boy for some moments intently, as if considering whether he would gratify the young fellow's curiosity.

"I went to live there," he replied at last, "because I wanted to withdraw myself as far as possible from association with the world."

"If that was your object you couldn't have selected a better spot to live unless you had gone to some uninhabited island."

"I found nothing but knavery and ingratitude in the world," went on the old man, "and I grew tired of it all. I had the cabin built upon those rocks, though the people of San Bruno were not slow in saying I was crazy to select such a place for a habitation. I let them talk, for my likes and dislikes were my own, and for their opinion I cared nothing. Still I did not seek to antagonize them, and after I came into possession of that chest of money I made many presents to the Church, for I feared that some time an attempt might be made to rob me, and I wanted to rely on the San Bruno authorities for help in case I required it. I arranged that system of signals—a smoke rocket by day, a fire rocket by night—to notify the town when I was in danger or in trouble."

"It is a great scheme," answered Paul.

"I gradually became known as the hermit of San Bruno, and to this title was added that of miser, not because any one knew that I had much money, but because it suited the whim of the people to call me so. Aside from Suzanne, you and those three bandits are the only persons who have actually seen that chest and its contents. I dare say you wonder how I came into possession of so much money."

"I'm not worrying about it, Mr. Scraggs. It's none of my business how you got it. I am sure you came by it honestly, for you don't look like a man who would be guilty of a crime."

"I thank you for your good opinion, Paul Scott. You're a good, straightforward boy, after my own heart. I feel that you are one of the few I have met in this world who are worthy of trust. An honest and true man is one of the noblest works of God—and the rarest. I believe you will grow up to be such, and for that reason I value your acquaintance, and thoroughly trust you. For that reason I rejoice that you have discovered this silver lode, for you will not squander its value in thousand and one foolish ways, like so many are prone to do."

"I hope not, Mr. Scraggs."

"The money I have—and there is thirty thousand dollars in gold and silver coin in that brass-bound box—would bring me many luxuries if I yearned for such; but its possession is the only luxury I crave for. I love to handle it; to count and recount it at my leisure; and to dream what it will some day do for Suzanne when I am dead and gone. The possession of that money alone makes me feel at ease concerning her future. I believe that heavy sum sent it to me for her sake."

"Then you did not earn it yourself?"

"No. I have owned many times that amount at various times in my life, but I have lost every dollar. I have been remorselessly robbed right and left by men in whom I reposed implicit faith, and that is the reason why the world and I came to fall out."

"If you've been swindled as you say, I don't wonder that you soured on the world. I'd hate to be skinned myself."

"That chest of money came to me in a strange way," went on the old man, with a far-away look in his eyes.

"A strange way?"

"Yes. I had been living at the cove for perhaps a year. Suzanne was not with me at the time. One night a storm raged along the coast. I afterwards heard some of the people of San Bruno say it was the worst in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. At any rate a good-sized ship went ashore right on the rocks in front of my cabin. She broke up there, and disappeared piece by piece until there was nothing left of her but a lot of wreckage. Two days after the storm, when the sea had become calm once more, I went fishing as was my custom among those rocks, and then it was that I found that brass-bound box jammed into a crevice near the shore. I could not move it as it stood—it was too heavy. Singular to say, a key was in the lock, so I had no difficulty in opening it. Then I discovered that it was full of coined money. I lost no time, you may guess, in carrying its contents up to the cabin, and then when the chest was empty I had little trouble in conveying that up the rocky path to my dwelling. The identity of the lost vessel was never discovered, and the money consequently became honestly mine. Soon afterward my only sister, who was living in Los Angeles, died, and her child, Suzanne, was thrown upon the world. I at once took her to the cabin, and she have ever since lived with me."

"She is a fine girl, all right," said Paul enthusiastically.

"She is the apple of my eye," replied the old man, fervently.

Two days later they got the report of the assay office, and it bore out Matthew Scraggs' estimates almost to the letter.

Paul, after a consultation with the hermit, decided to go to Los Angeles and form a company to work the four claims.

Of course, as soon as the news got out, as it did almost immediately, there was a rush of prospectors to the San Luis mountains, and the reports that came back set mining speculators by the ears.

Paul had a dozen offers for his rights, one syndicate offering him a million dollars in cash.

He declined to accept the offer, and found no difficulty in forming the company he had in view, which he called the San Luis Mining and Milling Company, which he capitalized at \$10,000,000.

While Paul had himself elected as president of the enterprise, he persuaded Mr. Scraggs to assume the management of the company.

He sold only a small quantity of the stock at a good figure, and with the money the hermit advanced they began operations.

A score of other companies sprang into existence at the same time, taking up claims all around the San Luis company's holdings.

Tunnels were built and shafts were sunk.

A few of the companies panned out results after great outlay.

Paul's company was the only one that had easy sailing from the start, for many hundreds of tons of rich ore lay on and close to the surface of his claims, and he was able to begin shipments at once.

Finally the syndicate which had made him the original offer of \$1,000,000 for the whole thing submitted another offer of \$5,000,000, and this, on the hermit's advice, he accepted.

Two millions of this amount was divided between Matthew Scraggs, Suzanne and Toby, as originally arranged.

As for Paul himself, he found himself a millionaire three times over.

A large trust company in Los Angeles became guardian for Paul and Toby until they attained their majority, while Matthew Scraggs had himself legally appointed in a similar capacity for Suzanne.

A few months ago Paul reached his twenty-first birthday, and he celebrated the occasion by uniting himself in marriage to Suzanne Norwood, when the old hermit bestowed his blessing and his share of the San Luis Mining Company's profits on the bride, retaining only the money in the old brass-bound chest at the cabin, where he still lives at a high and hearty age.

Paul embarked in a large business venture soon after his marriage, and Toby Titmarsh is his right-hand assistant and companion.

He may now be considered as permanently settled for life, rich, prosperous and happy.

Next week's issue will contain "NEVER SAY DIE; OR, THE YOUNG SURVEYOR OF HAPPY VALLEY."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

Miss Louise Stebinger, linotype operator in the office of the Herald-Leader, Menominee, Mich., died of heart failure recently. When taken to an undertaking establishment \$12,000 in bonds were found sewed to the inside of her corset. She came to Menominee from Chicago and was the only woman operator here in the two cities.

F. T. Jane, the well-known naval expert, addressing a meeting in Liverpool the other night, said it was not generally known that the Germans tried to land an expeditionary force in England and that it was the British navy that made them go back to their harbor again. The navy saved the country, he said, and there was never a word of it in the newspapers.

So satisfactory has the experiment of employing a dozen women as street car conductors proved that the Corporation Tramways Committee, Glasgow, Scotland, decided to employ as many additional women as would be necessary to fill the vacancies caused by men enlisting for service at the front. It is expected that 400 women will be required. They will receive 27 shillings (\$6.75) weekly and service uniforms will be provided.

Martha Schultz, the 15-year-old daughter of a well-to-do farmer, was recently attacked by two masked women near a coke plant in the outskirts of Connellsville, Pa. One of the women held the girl while the other pressed on each cheek the uncorked neck of a bottle filled with acid. Her face was badly burned, and she was then allowed to go. Some time ago Miss Schultz received a letter ordering her to place \$1,000 and a gold watch in a secluded spot. She ignored the letter.

Thomas Jefferson invented the modern plow. There were plows, of course, thousands of years before the time of the Sage of Monticello, but he first laid down the mathematical principles that underlie the construction of the plow and so enabled any blacksmith to make one. A plow consists of two wedges, a cutting and a lifting wedge, and Jefferson discovered and enunciated the proportions of each and the relations each bore to the other. Before his day no two smiths made plows alike. Now they are all made in accordance with a mathematical formula.

A great deal of interest has been shown in the programme recently issued, giving details of the proposed trans-continental automobile tour over the Old Trails route under the auspices of several road associations. Three trips are planned: One leaving the headquarters of National Highways Association, 18 Old Slip, New York City, June 15, over the Old Trails route, the programme for which has already been issued; an eastern return trip, leaving St. Paul about August 1, and a third western trip, leaving New York about September 1, for which a full programme is now being prepared.

A direct photograph of Mellish's comet, made at the Lowell Observatory the other morning, shows a tail composed of two divergent branches, the longer one of which is probably not less than 3,000,000 miles in length. Observations of the spectrum of the comet, it was announced recently, revealed the presence of the usual cometary gases. Cyanogen is one of its more prominent constituents, but appears in this comet in peculiar spectroscopic form, which may be of special scientific interest, while hydro-carbon is less prominent than in most comets. Other gases or vapors are evidenced by the presence in the spectrum of several strong, bright bands, but the chemical identification of these is as yet unknown.

Experiments made in New York for determining the shortest distance in which an automobile can be stopped when running at different speeds show that every increase of 50 per cent. over 20 miles an hour increases the distance required for stopping over 100 per cent., and that a car running forty miles an hour will go more than four times as far before it can be stopped as a car running at half that speed, or twenty miles an hour, says Popular Mechanics. The tests were made with a 50-horse-power car, with brakes in perfect working order. At eight miles an hour, the car was stopped within 6 feet, while at fifteen miles an hour, 15 feet of distance was required. A space of 25 feet was required for stopping with the car going at twenty miles an hour; 35 feet, at thirty miles an hour; 87 feet, at thirty-five miles an hour, and 103 feet, at forty miles an hour.

That none of the fourteen-inch rifles of the Canal defenses shall be fired until the powder chambers have been bored out so that the charge may be greatly increased, is the official order issued recently that has surprised and interested artillery officers on the Isthmus. The work is to be done while the guns are in their present positions on the gun carriages. The range of the guns will be so increased as to make them equal to the most powerful guns on the most modern battleships with the charges that will be made in these guns by increasing the size of their powder chambers. As to whether the guns will have the strength to be effective and safe, and whether the carriages will be able to sustain the shock, is a question on which artillery officers decline to be quoted. But they recall that one of these fourteen-inch rifles burst when fired with a charge of powder only slightly greater than the prescribed charge. All the newer guns of that class have now been fitted with a heavy steel band at the point of greatest strain. The Canal defenses are to be strengthened by a number of the most modern field guns with a maximum range of some 14,000 yards, and a very effective range up to 7,000 yards. They will be placed as to command the entire canal waterway, so that they can easily be trained and to any target.

THE GOLDEN GROTTO

— OR —

TWO BOYS' SEARCH FOR NO-NO LAND

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XXI.

CROSSING THE LAKE TO THE GOLDEN GROTTO.

No time was lost in getting on board; and it was well that this was so, for the savages came rushing to the shore, and as the canoe pushed out into the water a shower of spears followed.

"A very pleasant way those fellows have," said Jack, "but now we can afford to laugh at them, for we are out of range."

The boat on board the canoe was a good one, though, and in their hungry state it was comforting to find that there was a quantity of food in the craft. Some of it was not very palatable, but they were in no position to be very particular. They were able to rest, too, for it soon became apparent that they were not alone. When they had gone about two miles from shore, they allowed the boat to drift, so that the black servants might get some sleep.

The boat must have drifted a great distance during the night, for when morning came the shores of the lake, for undoubtedly it was a lake, were dimly visible.

"We can be seen plainly enough now," said Jack.

"But no one appears to be following us."

"Tra-A!" said Ben.

"Well?"

"Don't you think it is about time to see the trail of the Golden Grotto? See, there's the shore over there, for goodness! Wonder where it is?"

"I suppose you think you're very funny, don't you, Ben? Let me tell you, I don't mean to go back until I have found it, or, at any rate, I am absolutely certain that it does not exist."

"What do you think, Miss Edith?" asked Ben.

"Well, Ben, for a long time I was inclined to suppose you right, but it was only a sort of fancy to search for the Golden Grotto, but I've changed my mind lately."

"What do you do that?"

"Miss Morgan."

"Morgan? I don't understand that," said Frank.

"It appears to me that Morgan couldn't be traveling around here by himself unless there was something to pay him, and the only persons who do that are the savages. Morgan has been a scoundrel. I am going to report him to the police."

"Spoon like a fool, Edith! You'll just have to explain that away, Ben."

"Oh, go on, search for your gold!" answered Ben gruffly. "I'd just as soon be traveling about in one place as another."

"Tom," said Frank.

"Yes, massa."

"Do you understand the language that savage that you speak?"

"Yes, massa."

"Good, then I want you to question him. Maybe," he said, turning to his friends, "he has heard of this Golden Grotto. Anyway, there's no harm in trying him."

So Frank told Tom what questions he wanted, and after Tom had put them, he interpreted the answers.

"Ask him first of all where we are?" said Frank.

"On Lake Toku."

"Is it large?"

"A hundred miles."

"Come, that's a good-sized pond. Tom, what's that country we see over there?"

"No-No Land."

"What?" cried Frank, excitedly, springing to his feet. "Do you hear that, Jack? No-No Land! Then there is such a place after all, and Morgan was not deceiving us. Why, here's Lake Toku marked on the map."

Ben was not so satisfied now that it was all a dream. He had denied the existence of No-No Land, and to find that there was such a place somewhat changed his views upon the matter.

"Hurry up with the questions, Frank," said Jack.

"All right. Tom, ask him where the Golden Grotto is."

"Yes, ask him," echoed Ben, derisively.

"He says," answered Tom, "that he never heard of such a place."

"Ask him again. Call it a cave of gold, or gold cavern. Perhaps that may be more easily understood."

"There is never land of gold, or gold cavern in No-No Land."

Frank's face fell. Jack was visibly disappointed, and Ben laughed heartily. It seemed as if the journey had been made in vain, and all the dangers they had met with had been encumbered for the sake of something which had no existence.

The silence which fell over the party after Tom's last words was broken by Edith.

"Suppose that you let me ask you a question, Tom?"

"What is it?" asked Frank. "We've had quite a

asked, and you know what answers I received. Nothing could be clearer."

"But you don't object, Frank?"

"Object? Certainly not. You are at liberty, you know, Edith, to do anything you please."

"Very well. I have no doubt he'll answer anything I ask him, for, savage as he is, he seems to be grateful for the way in which we have treated him. Now, Tom, ask him if there is any temple or tomb hidden in the ground, the walls of which glitter like that," and Edith pointed to the sun as she spoke.

"He won't say."

"Ah, then," answered Edith, quickly, "he does know something. Tell him he ought to answer me, because if it had not been for me he would have been left behind and would have been drowned in the cave."

When this was explained to the savage, he kept silent for some minutes, and by the working of his face it was evident that a severe mental struggle was going on.

At last he spoke.

"Yes," said Tom. "There is such a place."

"Where?"

"It is near where we are."

"Will he show us the way?"

Another long talk took place between Tom and the savage, and then this answer came:

"He says that the place of which he speaks is inhabited by gods and that it is death for any one but one of the wise men to enter it. He has seen the entrance to it, and can show you the way to get there. But as he feels very kindly toward you, on account of what you have done for him, he begs you not to enter the sacred temple."

"Edith, you're a wonder!" cried Jack. "Now, what do you think of the Golden Grotto, Ben?"

"We are not there yet."

"No, but we soon shall be. Take your instructions from the savage, Tom," cried Frank, "and then steer straight for the Golden Grotto!"

CHAPTER XXII.

FRANK ARRIVES AT THE GROTTO.

At the prospect of finding the Golden Grotto, which had been the object of their journey into this wild and uncouth country, the boys were in the highest spirits.

They forgot all the toil which they had undergone in the search for which had followed them to their destination. On the night before their arrival, they had been the objects of much ridicule, but the next day the party had got up. Edith was just as excited as the boys, whilst Paul took matters calmly, as became a man of his age.

"Well, for whether the craft will hold it all?" said Jack, looking at the shore.

"Well, we said that they looked upon it as a kind of Noah's Ark," said Ben.

"Well, I suppose. If there is a Golden Grotto, there must be gold, or the name would have no sense."

You don't mean to say, Ben, that you still disbelieve? You can't be as obstinate as all that."

"Oh, I reckon, my lad, there's gold right enough, and I am not worrying about that. I'm just wondering how we are going to get the gold away after we have found it."

"That doesn't bother me," said Jack. "Why, in the canoe, of course."

"And fight our way back from here to the coast? A mighty cheerful prospect with all these savages hanging on our trail."

"Wait till trouble comes, Ben," said Frank. "There's no sign of it now, anyway."

Scarcely had he spoken when Tom became very excited and waved his hands.

"Look, massa!" he cried.

Naturally, they all turned, and, gazing in the direction indicated by the black, they saw three great canoes approaching from the shore they had left the night before.

"A chase!" cried Frank. "Pull away, lads, or we're dead men!"

"Bah!" exclaimed Jack. "What's the good of running away? Let's stay and fight them."

"Stay and be killed!" observed Ben.

"Oh, make them row hard," said Edith. "Don't let us have any more fighting."

"Not if I can help it. Besides, to stay here is certain death. Our enemies would approach us from three sides at once and, with the few rifles we have, we couldn't stand them off."

"They'd send us to the bottom if they got near," said Ben.

"You bet they would, Ben, and I'd rather have solid ground under my feet if any fighting's to be done than water."

Jack did not urge his plan, for he saw that there was good sense in what Frank said.

The black oarsmen worked well. All along they had been good servants, and, besides that, they knew they were rowing for their lives. If they fell into the hands of the savages, they were aware of the fact that they could not expect any more mercy than the white people would receive.

It was an anxious time, for the savages were gaining, and the shore was still some distance away.

"Where shall we go when we get there?" asked Jack.

"Take shelter in the Golden Grotto!" answered Ben, somewhat sarcastically.

"By jingo!" cried Frank. "The very place! You only meant it in a joke, Ben, but you couldn't have spoken better if you had intended it to be serious."

"Is there anything particularly good about the Golden Grotto?" asked Ben.

"Yes, didn't you hear what the wounded savage told us?"

"If I did, I forgot it."

"Well, he said that they looked upon it as a kind of Noah's Ark, which all of them, except the medicine men, were afraid to enter."

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

A FREAK EAR OF CORN.

A freak ear of corn, that is a genuine freak, was brought to Laurinburg, N. C., by J. A. Muse recently. It is a cluster of ears, nine in all. One is a full-grown ear and this is surrounded by eight smaller ears.

FOUND STOLEN GOLD.

The \$7,000 in gold bullion which was taken from a stage near Rye Valley, Ore., by two masked bandits has been found. The gold, cast in a solid brick, was found in a badger hole not far from the scene of the hold-up.

CAMPHOR IN THE PHILIPPINES.

It is reported that Blumea balsamifera which grows wild in abundance in the Philippines, has been found to be identical with the plant from which ngai camphor is obtained in certain parts of China. The commercial possibilities of this plant are now being investigated by the Philippine Bureau of Science and Bureau of Forestry.

ROBBERS SUBSTITUTE DUMMY SAFE.

Some time the other night robbers entered the Woolworth store, Camden, N. J., moved a heavy safe from its position under a bright electric light, and substituted in its place a dummy constructed of cardboard. When employees entered the store they were surprised when they noticed the oddly-constructed substitute. Investigation revealed the original burglar-proof safe in a secluded corner of the building with its door blown open. The thieves obtained less than \$100 from the safe.

FIND ANCIENT RELICS.

Discoveries of relics, said to antedate the Iroquois Indians, have been made at the foot of Owasco Lake, near Auburn, N. Y. Edward H. Gohl, an adopted member of the Onondaga tribe of Indians, recently found a fragment of pottery. Further investigations resulted in the finding of several other pieces of other relics.

A scientific survey of the entire field has been begun. A force of men has been employed and nearly half an acre already has been explored. Most of the articles found thus far were at a depth of several feet.

DOOR FASTENER.

Placing a wedge under a door is one of the most effectual means of closing it, for pushing upon the door from the outside only increases the effect of the wedge. A convenient device of this kind is made of metal, and it not only serves to wedge the door but also contains a mechanical bell mounted on the same base and behind the wedge in such way that pressure on the face of the wedge against the door causes the bell to ring. The base carries a set of short points underneath so that it can be put in place and grips upon the carpet or flooring so as not to slide out of position. Such a device can be carried in the pocket, and it is to be recommended for traveling.

THE VIRGINIUS AFFAIR.

The Virginius affair occurred during the first Cuban war for independence. In October, 1870, the Virginius cleared from New York for Curacao, flying the American flag. Late in October, 1873, she was captured on the high seas by the Spanish gunboat Tornado, taken to Santiago, and there found to be loaded with arms for the Cubans, and carrying as passengers a number of Cubans, Americans and British subjects. The crew and passengers were tried by court-martial, and between November 4th and 7th, 90 Cubans, 6 British and 30 Americans were shot as pirates. The United States protested. The Spanish Government agreed that such proceedings must stop; but before its telegram ordering the execution to cease had arrived about everybody on the vessel had been executed. The United States demanded an apology, an indemnity and the return of the vessel. After a long and heated discussion, the Spanish Government proved to our satisfaction that the Virginius had no right to use the American flag, that she was therefore practically a pirate, and that she was well known as a filibuster. The vessel was returned to us, but Spain was not required to apologize or pay an indemnity. The Virginius foundered at sea on her way to New York about December 26, 1873.

DOGS AT THE "MOVIES."

That dogs can see and understand picture plays is undoubtedly true. While living in England, I had various friends try out their pets, with the results, recorded here, says a contributor to Our Dumb Animals.

In a north of England town there is a dog that does not show any interest in ordinary pictures. But if this dog views a film of a fox-hunt, a menagerie or a scene with dogs in it, he gets highly excited, and barks loud and long. Once he managed to get "behind" at a movie theater, after a leopard film had been shown, as he wanted to meet the big cat in the flesh.

A picture that moved him to fury was one of a man who grew horns and butted after drinking a glass of goat's milk.

On another occasion he went almost mad with joy at seeing an Irish colleen being presented with a little pig by her lover.

Not so long ago an entertainment was arranged for prize-bred dogs, the films used being animal ones. In the audience were three mastiffs, a bull-terrier, a bulldog, an Irish terrier, two great Danes and two fox-terriers. The first picture was of a dog show. All the dogs did was to walk up and down and look at it, almost on the verge of tears through being so bored. They seemed to say, "We know all about that." For it was clear that they could tell that the dogs on the film were not with them in the flesh. But when they saw an elephant walking it naturally excited them. They walked down aisle and started barking, and the bull-terrier threatened to attack the elephant, while the two Danes barked furiously.

JOLLY JACK JONES

—OR—

KNOCKING ABOUT THE WORLD

By ED. KING

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER IV (continued)

The yacht in question was over near Saugerties' dock. It was not the biggest or the handsomest steam yacht in the world by any means, but it was still a very elegant and expensive craft.

The yacht was moving slowly up the river, and while Jack was watching the sailors in their blue and white suits with the whole stretch of the Catskill Mountains behind, to lend to the picturesqueness of the scene, he fell to dreaming, so to speak; to wondering how it would feel to be a sailor on a millionaire's yacht, and a whole lot of other things, when all at once he was startled out of his reverie by the hoarse croak of a steamer's whistle right ahead.

It was the Albany day boat coming down. It had stolen upon Jack unawares.

With the wind in the direction it was, the only way to avoid the big steamboat was to cut across the bow of the smaller one.

The yacht was going so slowly that Jack instantly resolved to take his chances and try it.

He waved his hat and tried to make the yacht sailors understand what he was going to do, but nobody paid the slightest attention to him.

Then, to his horror, just as he started to cross the bow the yacht started up at full speed.

"Look out! Look out!" yelled Jack.

He could only pray that the wind would carry him past the danger point, but it didn't.

Caught in the swash of the day boat's paddles, Jack's frail craft was thrown a bit nearer the yacht than it otherwise would have gone.

"Jig's up!" gasped Jack.

Sizing his banjo, he sprang overboard just in time to save himself, for the sailboat, cut in two by the sharp prow of the yacht, immediately sank, leaving Jack in the water. Hearing to the loud cries of the captain, who, from the look on his face, he piled on the agony, seemed to be decidedly drunk.

"Stop that swearing! Stop the boat! Take the boy aboard!" shouted a gentleman in a yachting cap and a striped suit of very loud pattern, who had suddenly put a sudden appearance on deck.

He ran to the rail and called out:

"Can you swim, boy? Can you swim? Say, are you drowning? Come on board! I'll pay for your board!"

It was a bitter truth for Jack that he could swim, or he would have been out of business before this.

"That man is as drunk as a goat, and the captain is the same way," he thought. "By gracious, it's queer how these rich folks go on!"

"Throw him a line! Throw him a line!" cried the gentleman in the striped suit.

"Do you suppose I want to have that boy's death on my conscience? Will some one throw him a line?"

The yacht stopped and the line came flying.

Jack caught it, and, clinging desperately to his banjo with the overhand, begged the sailors to pull him alongside the yacht, where he soon scrambled on board.

"Well, boy, well, well, well!" cried the gentleman, slapping Jack heartily upon the back. "Wet through, eh? Wet through! Clothes all spoiled; never mind, never mind, so long as the b—banjo is saved. I—hic—I like banjos. You shall play and I—I'll—hic—I'll pay, and we'll have a jolly time all around. Whoopla! Wake up there, Captain Bills of the yacht Komodo! Let her go, old man! Let her go!"

Was the man really drunk, or was he crazy, or was he playing off for a purpose?

As Jack shook the water out his clothes and tried to dry his banjo with his pocket handkerchief, he found it impossible to decide.

CHAPTER V.

THE JOLLY MR. DOBBS.

"Well, boy: well, boy! We must dry you up first!" cried the talkative gentleman, giving Jack another slap on the back. "Here you, Dick Darrage! Here, hey! this way! Take this boy down below. Give him towels to rub himself with! Give him a suit of somebody's clothes, and I'll pay for it. Tell the steward to pass around champagne to all hands as soon as you are through."

"By Jove! this is a funny kind of crowd," thought Jack. "They seem to be all filling up on champagne early in the morning from the boss down to the cabin boy. Well, there's one thing certain, they won't get any of the blame stuff into me."

He might also have thought it strange that the owner of the yacht had said this when he was going to water, and wanted him to get on shore, but just seemed to take it for granted that Jack had nothing better to do

than go right along with him, for the yacht was now shooting up the river at full speed.

As a matter of fact, Jack did not care where he went, for now that the burglar's yacht was a wreck, there was no object in going back to Catskill. He was well satisfied to have landed where he had, for the prospects of picking up a lot of money from this eccentric yachtsman looked first-class.

"That's a gay old buck, your boss," remarked Jack to Dick Darrage, who led the way down to the fo'castle, and the boy laid his banjo near a stove to dry it.

"You bet he is," replied the young sailor, who had imbibed just enough to be talkative. "Here you are, cully. Strip off your duds and put on these here. They are mine, and as we are just about of a build I reckon they'll do."

"Who'll pay for them? The boss?" inquired Jack.

"Of course. Double price, most likely. That's his style."

"What's his name, Dick?"

"His name is Mr. Dunning Dobbs, and he's a big gun on Wall street, that's who he is. Say, cully, what's yours?"

"Jack Jones."

"Chuck them wet clothes into the corner, Jack. Want me to give you a rub down with these here towels?"

"No, I can attend to that part of the business myself."

"Do you play the banjo?"

"Sure."

"Wisht I could. Say, he's just as likely to give you a hundred dollars as he is ten cents if you play to suit him. He's always chucking his money around when he's jagged."

"Is he jagged now?"

"Sure Mike! Can't you see for yourself?"

"I kind o' thought he was."

"Kind of thought! Well, now, you just wait till night! Oh, I tell you these sprees of his are great rackets. He never takes any one with him. Just jumps aboard the yacht and off he goes. Worst is, Cappy Bills gets his load too, and some day he'll run us all to blazes. But here I am telling State secrets, and that's against the rule."

"You needn't be afraid of me," said Jack, getting into Dick's underclothes, which were none too large for him. "I'll never open my mouth."

"You'd better not," replied Dick. "He's a big gun, and you bet he'd make it hot for you. Where were you going in your boat?"

"It was not my boat. I was only running it up to Cat Hill for a man. He's a stranger to me. I can't help it if it's sunk. It wasn't my fault."

"No," said Dick, emphatically. "Between you and me, it wasn't. It was Captain Bills' fault. He had no business to start up the way he did with you between the Kondado and the steamer."

"Hark at me! Avast below! Whoop-la! Are you never coming up to give me a tune on your banjo?" a voice called down from the deck.

"There he goes! That's him!" declared Dick.

"Aye, aye, sir! The boy is almost dressed. Be up right away!" he called back.

"Hurry up your cakes!" he whispered. "He's liable to come tumbling down here and take you by the scruff of the neck. There's no telling what he'll do."

Jack finished his toilet in a hurry, and, taking his banjo, the sheepskin head of which was now dry, he went on deck.

He found Mr. Dunning Dobbs pacing up and down impatiently.

"Where's that champagne?" he shouted. "Dick Durage, tell the steward to pass around the champagne! All hands must have a drink with me! Tune her up, boy! Tune her up! Play! Sing! Dance! Do any old thing! Whoopla! Let her go!"

Yet in spite of Mr. Dunning Dobbs' wild speech Jack did not fail to notice that the man eyed him closely, and his eye did not look like the eye of a drunken man by any means.

Jack sat down on a camp stool, laughing as usual, and he began on "Hello, Mah Baby!"

This he followed up by other coon songs, and then did a bell piece, swinging the banjo in one hand and picking the strings.

Then it was a Spanish fandango, and Mr. Dunning Dobbs, kicking over the stool on which he had been sitting, began to dance a pas de seul.

The crew, to whom the steward had passed champagne, just as though they had been the yachtsman's guests, laughed uproariously and clapped and stamped.

Jack waved the wine aside when it came to him.

Mr. Dobbs did not insist upon his drinking, as he was afraid he would do, and Jack noticed that he did not drink any of it himself.

This confirmed him in his idea that the broker was not by any means as drunk as he pretended to be, and was doing all this for a purpose, although Jack could not imagine why.

Another strange thing had happened while the music was going on.

Captain Bills, who certainly was not sober, turned the yacht around, and instead of going up the river, they were now going down.

It looked as if Mr. Dunning Dobbs was just pushing about here, there and everywhere, merely to kill time.

Every time Jack stopped playing, the broker would call out for more until at last the boy stopped from sheer fatigue.

Strangely enough, the yacht stopped just at the same time, and the order was given to drop anchor.

The place was a little land-locked cove, where not a house was to be seen anywhere.

It was somewhere between Saugerties and Rondout, and that was all Jack knew.

"Good! Splendid! Great! Boy, you're an----" cried Mr. Dobbs. "Come down in the cabin with me. I want to talk business. Want to see how much I----" What you grinning at? Think I'm full? You're not by a long chalk. Come on! Come on! You're not laughing about you to the square inch, that's all I ever saw."

(To be continued)

TIMELY TOPICS

Seymour, Ind., streets will be dogless if an unusual ordinance now proposed is passed by the City Council. Petitions signed by 300 property owners have been filed with the council requesting that an ordinance be passed to make it unlawful for dog owners to permit the animals to run at large. The first ordinance was filed some time ago and was regarded as a joke. The police estimate that there are 750 dogs in the city and only 150 licenses have been taken out since March 1.

Stung by conscience, a man who had been using a pass belonging to a railroad official forwarded a \$10 bill to pay for the traveling he had done without cost on the San Antonio and Aransas Pass railroad in the past. The letter, inclosing the new bill and a short letter, was addressed to H. D. Kilgore, city ticket agent, San Antonio, Texas. The conscience contribution was turned over to George F. Lupton, general passenger agent, who said that he was glad to see that the gentleman has evidently hit the "Philadelphia Sawdust Trail."

The southern party of the Canada Arctic expedition was safe on Sept. 13, 1914, according to letters of that date, received at Sioux City, Iowa, by Mrs. Anderson from her husband, Dr. Rudolph M. Anderson, who is in charge of the party. The letters were written from Herschel Island. Dr. Anderson, with his two ships, Alaska and North Star, according to the letter, had proceeded eastward as far as Dezhin and Union Straits. Mention was made of the party sent out to search for the Steffansson party of the Canadian Arctic expedition.

Lightning has been proved to have struck a building with a force equal to more than 12,000 horse-power. A single horse-power, in mechanical calculation, is equivalent to raising a weight of 33,000 pounds one foot in a minute. The force of lightning, therefore, has been proved to be equal to the raising of 381,000,000 pounds, one foot in a minute. This is equal to the united power of twelve of the largest steamers, having collectively twenty-four engines of 700-horse-power each. The velocity of electricity is so great that it would travel around the world eight times in a second.

Charles Brumham, forty-five, a painter, stumbled as he was climbing the steps of his home in Ashford street, Albany, N. Y., the other night, and fell against the railing. He had a lantern a box of matches in his waistcoat pocket. In an instant his clothes, oil-soaked in the course of his work, burst into flame. So bright was the flare that Mrs. Louise McAllan, his stepdaughter, thought at first the house was on fire. She sprang into the air and ran down the stairs, shouting the alarm. Brumham, who was unconscious, was taken by his physician, Dr. George N. Johnson, to the Dutch Forty Hospital, where it was said he

The claim of Tigerton, Wis., that it has the heaviest family in the United States, has been shattered by Watertown, Minn. Tigerton has the Hoffman family, nine of whose members weigh only 2,153 pounds, or an average of 233 pounds each; but Watertown has the Applequist family, the total weight of which is 2,390 pounds for only eight people. On reading of the Tigerton claim the Applequists went to the city scales and got the weights. They were recorded as follows: John Applequist, father, 280 pounds; Mrs. Applequist, the mother, 250 pounds; Charles Applequist, one of the boys, 410 pounds; Peter Applequist, 340 pounds; A. G. Applequist, 325 pounds; Mrs. Skone, 320 pounds; Mrs. Olson, 225 pounds, and Mrs. Peterson, 240 pounds. The eight Applequists, parents and six children, weigh just 257 pounds more than the nine Hoffmans.

Announcement of an advance in wages and reduction of working hours for all employees of the Ford Motor Company, Ltd., of Canada, was made recently by G. M. McGregor, general manager of the concern. All employees who have been in the service of the company six months or longer are to receive a minimum wage of 50 cents an hour, or \$4 a day, the working hours being reduced to eight hours a day, or forty-eight hours a week. The company employs about 2,400 persons at its factory at Ford, Ont., and its nine branches located in the principal cities of Canada. It is estimated that this advance in wages will distribute among Ford employees in Canada, in addition to the wages they already receive, about \$600,000 a year. The scale as adopted increases the wages of all employees 15 to 60 per cent. The parent Ford Company in Detroit pays a minimum wage of \$5 a day, based on a profit-distribution system. The Canadian company's wage scale is simply an advance in pay without reference to profits, it was stated.

From Switzerland, the home of the watch and clock industry, comes the description of a clock made entirely of straw and willow withes. Of course there is no particular value in the use of this material, except to demonstrate the ingenuity of the clockmaker. In this clock there is not a single piece of metal. Even the chimes are made of straw put through a special process, so as to give them a ringing tone when struck. Instead of the ordinary swinging pendulum, this clock is provided with a see-saw movement, there being two weights on each side. One great difficulty in making the interior mechanism of the clock was to get the proper elasticity in the springs, which were pressed and twisted into coils very much resembling Chinese ham. The clock is nine feet high with a face eighteen inches in diameter. The base is of wicker construction from which four heavy linked screw claws serve as guys to keep the clock properly balanced. The movement operates 24 hours without winding. It took over thirty days to complete the clock.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

Fish are being shipped to England via Montreal from British Columbia waters, the reason being the fish shortage due to the war's interference with the North Sea fisheries.

It is announced in London that nearly \$2,500,000 capital has been promised for the proposed British national dyestuff industry, by means of which it is planned to supply the place of former importations from Germany.

Jerome Newberry, a young farmer of Redondo Beach, Cal., while ploughing a patch of ground which had been allowed to grow weeds for many years, unearthed a large gold watch which had been lost by his grandfather in 1860.

The port of New York in 1914 handled 46 per cent. of the entire export trade of the United States, and the total of \$1,807,000,000 of foreign trade, export and import, which passed through the port was larger than that of all the other American ports combined.

In 1914 the total value of all farm products in the United States was approximately \$10,000,000,000, which is \$83,000,000 more than the total for 1913, and breaks all records. The 1914 total is more than double the combined value of farm products fifteen years ago.

It is notorious that afforestation is one of the most urgent of China's needs, and it is therefore of interest to learn that a school of forestry is about to be established in the University of Nanking. The co-operation of the director of forestry at Manila has been secured, and it is proposed to send two experts from Manila to aid in establishing the school.

Wooden sandals are now being worn to a great extent by the laboring classes in Mexican cities and by natives engaged in manual labor in place of the old form of leather sandals used by the Mexicans for many centuries. They are being substituted for the primitive home-made leather sandals because of the scarcity and high price of native tanned leather, because of the scarcity of sheep-skin thongs for lacing, and because of poverty. Indian is becoming more particular about the wearing of his feet.

Mrs. Eugene A. Philbin, wife of Justice Philbin, of the Supreme Court, left a bag containing \$15,000 worth of diamonds and other jewels on board a Long Island train when she alighted at Garden City, L. I. The jewels were in a bag, which she did not miss until she reached the Garden City Hotel. County and house detectives set out at once to find the jewels, as Mrs. Philbin was not sure that they had been left on the train. Walter Breeck, a ticket collector, saw the bag just as the train pulled into Hempstead. He opened it and was amazed at the contents. Purposing to turn it over to the lost and found department of the railroad in Brooklyn, he took a train leaving Hempstead at half-past four o'clock in the afternoon. Mrs. Philbin asked the train crew if they had seen the bag when the train passed through this place, and Breeck returned the bag to her, receiving a reward of \$50.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Lady—I didn't know your little boy wore glasses, Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith—Well, yer see, miss, they belonged to 'is pore farver, and I thought it was a pity to waste 'em.

"Charles seems to be very exacting," said a fond mamma to the dear girl who was dressing for the wedding. "Never mind, mainma," said she, sweetly. "They are his last wishes."

"The old man doesn't speak any foreign language, does he?" "No. He's just a plain, downright, honest, no-style, hard-workin', money-makin', family-supportin' American."

The Hibernian laborer paused in front of a book store and a sign in the window caught his eye: "Dickens' Works All This Week for Only \$4.00." "The divvle he does!" he exclaimed in disgust. "Well, the dirty scab."

"When I was shipwrecked in South America," said Captain Bowsprit, "I came across a tribe of wild women who had no tongues." "Mercy!" cried one of the listeners of the fair sex. "How could they talk?" "They couldn't!" snapped the old salt. "That's what made 'em wild."

A young fellow had "popped the question," and was anxiously awaiting the answer that was to decide his fate. "Do you ever gamble at cards?" the young lady asked. "No," he answered, "but if I did, now would be the time." "Why?" she inquired. "Because," he said, with a smile, "I hold such a beautiful hand!"

The solemnity of the meeting was somewhat disturbed when the eloquent young theologian pictured in glowing words the selfishness of men who spent their evenings at the club, leaving their wives in loneliness at home. "Think, my hearers," said he, "of a poor, neglected wife, all alone in the great, dreary house, rocking the cradle of her sleeping babe with one foot and wiping away her tears with the other."

THE GHOST.

By Horace Appleton

Tom Legget was the name of a very eccentric individual who formerly lived in the town of Greenfield.

His eccentricity was not of that kind which made him unpopular by either word or act.

Indeed, Tom would not have willingly injured the meanest insect that ever crawled.

Still, he had his errors—grave errors—and excessive drinking was one of them.

In Dean's house on a stormy night in winter, after inviting all hands to drink, Tom would launch into the greatest maze of yarns about this, that, and the other, ever heard of.

It was acknowledged by all that, when about half tipsy, he could invent more lies than any other man in town.

On the night when the following story of his was told—which I here give as near verbatim as I remember—the bar was pretty well filled with a motley assemblage of neighbors.

Some were seated in chairs around the fire, others on tops of barrels, and some on the lower end of the counter.

Customers were scarce, and the company present were mainly bent upon the enjoyment of their pipes, with a nip now and then at the ale.

A few feeble jokes had been gotten off at somebody's expense in the company, which were not relished very well, when Tom opened with the following interrogatory:

"I say, landlord, did ye ever hear tell of a genuine ghost in these parts—a real, downright, out-and-out ghost?"

"No, Tom, I never did; unless that lame mule of Farmer Jones, which the boys whitewashed and tied to the church-steeple, was one."

"Nary a time," said the unlucky owner of that piece of dead flesh, who occupied one of the barrel-heads. "Those boys got their deserts, and that 'ere mule is jest as pretty an animal as ever ye laid eyes on, now."

"Then Tom had better give us his story, for I have never heard that one about the mule beaten yet. What say the company?"

"The story! The story!" they all exclaimed.

Tom, shrewdly threat, adjusted himself to a more comfortable position in his chair before the glowing fire, and commenced:

"Ye all remember the cold, blustering, disagreeable winter of last (twentieth) of November, I suppose? It was the night Jeff Knox's brindled steer died, and all the ponds around froze up solid. Well, on that night, as some of ye know, for I see 'em here now, I was seated by the fire, and engaged in ab'it of the same. But, however, I had here turned us all out-of-doors. Didn't ye?"

"It was about the hour of closing, I think," replied another of the landlord.

"Yes, and as we stood shivering about the doorstep the midnight express came thundering through the town, and it called us all in again for a nightcap. Well, when I

reached home that night someone had left a light on the sitting-room table with a mate to it in the fireplace. I thought it strange that such a big, roaring fire should have been left for me to go to bed by—quite an unusual thing.

"The old people have sat up later than common," I thought, never once thinking of the boys.

I sat down in the big arm-chair in front of the fireplace, took off my boots and put them beside the fender, and then laid back and watched the huge log blaze.

"This is solid comfort," thought I. "Here I am having a nice time of it, and outside the weather is cold as fury!"

I decided to have a little smoke and then retire; so I blew out the light and put my feet upon the fender.

"Very soon after I fell asleep in the chair with the pipe in my mouth.

"I had a distinct remembrance of hearing the bell ring one and of comparing the time with our old clock in the corner.

"It was just two minutes behind. When I awoke the hand pointed to three. I had slept two hours. Relighting my pipe, I turned my attention toward the fire, which had got down to embers.

Fuel was added, and I soon had the pleasure of feeling myself growing warmer, for the room had cooled off rapidly during my sleep.

"It was half-past three o'clock when I determined to retire. I rose to get the lamp, when my eyes fell upon the west window, which looks out into an old cornfield at the back of the house.

"Was it fancy? Did my eyes deceive me?

"I thought as I looked a man's face dropped down out of sight.

"The curtain moved as if someone had hit it intentionally, and set it curveting from side to side.

"I did not see how it could be done with the window shut.

"While I was watching it and trying to think where the draught came from, the object that first gave me the shock came into view.

"It stood there looking straight into the room; a man—or, at least, a man's face.

"Goodness gracious, what ails the man?" I asked myself.

"There was in his face such an expression of diabolical wickedness as I never again wish to behold.

"He made no movement, nor spoke a word to explain himself. But right there under the window, in a black, shiny, bald-headed coat, an old silk hat that had seen many changes in fashion, set jauntily on one side of his head, for all the world like a second edition of the village schoolmaster; his face wan and pale, with high cheekbones; his chin covered with a stubble of short beard.

"But most startling of all, and what filled me with horror, was a wound in his neck.

"Those dead eyes looking into the room—the man standing there as if he had been a statue cut in stone.

"There was something so horrible in his face that for a minute or so I stood by the chair as if struck dumb.

"Where had I seen that shiny black coat and that old hat? Somewhere, it seemed to me, in my own family.

"His features, too, were not those of a stranger.

"Then I named over to myself several individuals whom I thought he resembled.

"There must be someone—yes, there was one—my wife's brother!"

"I had heard her say that a younger brother had disappeared under circumstances that led them to think he had been murdered."

"This, then, must be his ghost returned to see his sister."

"But, pooh!" thought I. "There are no such things as ghosts! This must be some poor traveler who has cut himself by accident."

"At all events, I made up my mind to address him. I took one step forward, and as I opened my lips to speak the figure disappeared."

"There was no waving of the curtain now—nothing to show that there had been a ghostly presence behind it."

"Occasionally the slam of a door reached my ears, telling how the wind was using it."

"Presently I distinguished the tramp, tramp, tramp, of horses' feet."

"The stable was connected with the shed, but, strange to tell, the sounds were approaching the kitchen, seemingly but a few feet away from the very door."

"In a second more I was horrified to hear a horse's hoofs stamping across the kitchen floor."

"There is something awful in such sounds at such an hour, and for the first time I felt my hair begin to rise from my head."

"Looking around, I saw the odd figure once more at the window."

"The sight of that ghastly face and those glazed eyes watching me so intently drove me to decide upon acting at once."

"Speak!" I cried. "Are you a man or a ghost?"

"There was no response; only a side motion—a slight movement of the head, and the specter had disappeared again. No sound of wind this time, but those hoofs meandering here and there were more dreadful, and I concluded it must be some villain who meant to rob and murder me at the same time."

"Reaching above the fireplace, I took down my double-barreled gun, cocked both barrels, and held ready point it toward the window, resolving to fire at the first glimpse of his ghostship, or, as I more than half-suspected, thief."

"All at once there came a terrific gust that shook the whole house from foundation to chimney."

"It made the old clock stop for the first time in a dozen years; roaring down the fireplace, scattering the ashes about the room, and half blinding me."

"Through the cloud of dust I saw the face again at the window."

"In another second my eyes were really demolished by the report of my gun."

"Both barrels, heavily loaded with shot, had gone right through the window, taking nearly the whole sash with it, and sending me flat on my back by the force of the concussion."

"What's the matter, Tom? What ye been shooting at at this time o' night?" were the first words I heard, after picking myself up from the floor.

"There in their night clothes stood the old folks, and behind them, in the doorway, the two boys—John and Harry."

"Grandfather held a candle in his hand, and looked at me with alarm in his face."

"The boys were whimpering with the cold."

"Ghosts or robbers, I ain't sure which," I replied.

"I started toward the window."

"On looking out I beheld the figure stretched at full length on the ground."

"The sight gave me courage."

"That ghost won't want to haunt these parts any longer," said I. "He has two charges of shot in his body somewhere—enough to kill even a ghost. Hold the lantern, grandfather, while I take a closer look at him."

"After placing the lantern in his hand, I sprang through the window-frame, and was soon bending over the supposed dead body."

"What was my astonishment and chagrin to find it neither ghost nor man, but a lot of straw stuffed into my great-grandfather's old clothes, which had been used to scare crows; it had been redressed and fastened to a nail with a long cord, reaching from the boy's room down."

"It all flashed over my mind in an instant."

"The boys, knowing my late hours, had played the trick on me."

"I returned to the house, replying to inquiries that the boys would let where it was for the present."

"As for John and Harry, they had no further occasion to complain of the cold that night, for the warming they got before they went upstairs again was enough to last until daylight, and gave them a lesson they will not forget."

"Soon after I went out in the kitchen, and found the old mare standing with her head over the sink, patiently waiting for a drink."

"Her halter having become loosened, and the doors from stable to kitchen open, she had improved the opportunity to go on a tour of investigation."

"This, boys, is the sum total of my ghost story; about as real, I guess, as any that happen hereabouts."

"I never took much stock in these shrouded images—there is always some human agency about them; and as for the scare—well, I don't want to see any more ghostly faces peering in at the windows, I tell you."

Simon Krum, 79 years old, of 331 East Ninety-seventh street, New York, was arrested for begging the other day. Two bank books showing deposits of nearly \$1,900 were found on him. He was sentenced to ten days on Riker's Island by Magistrate Murphy in Yorkville Court. Detective Harvey of the Mendicancy Squad saw Krum going from store to store in Thirty-fourth street, asking from pedestrians. He followed the beggar to Thirty-fourth street and Third avenue. The bank books were in a silk bag suspended from Krum's neck. He had \$16.00 in cash. "What's the use of earning when money comes so easy," said the old man. When he confessed that he had been begging for eight years, "I can't spend all the money I get and when I die, I will leave it to charity."

NEWS OF THE DAY

The Kuskokwim River, the second largest river in Alaska, is about to be opened to commerce in consequence of the discovery, by Capt. Lukens of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, of a navigable channel in its extensive and hitherto little known delta. The river itself is navigable for a distance of 600 miles from its mouth, and is thus destined to make accessible a very promising mining, fishing and agricultural region.

Mrs. Harry C. Leach, wife of the pastor of the Morningside Baptist Church, Pittsfield, Mass., in an emergency, filled her husband's pulpit at both morning and evening services, preaching two sermons. Mr. Leach was called to Maine by the illness of his mother, and his wife volunteered to preach. Her evening subject was "The Heavenly Vision." Mr. and Mrs. Leach have been married about twelve years. This was her first appearance as his substitute in a pulpit.

A day laborer nine years ago, James M. Phillips, of Oley, Pa., can answer quite satisfactorily the question "Does farming pay?" He had a public vendue the other day, and the \$7,300 proceeds represented his net profits in the nine years. Mr. Phillips believes in specializing when it relates to the dairy herd, and in talking of his success with Ayrshire cows says it does not cost any more to raise pure-bred stock than mixed breed. The secret of his success he puts thus: "Tend to your own business; farm when it is time to farm, and rest or enjoy leisure when the proper time is at hand."

When the plans are in full operation for the government of Tangier, Morocco, "the first really international city of the world," the community will have as a legislative body an assembly chosen by popular vote and composed of twenty-four Moroccan members and eleven foreigners, representatives of the powers. A mixed court is provided for, along the lines of the international court in Egypt. The arrangement is that it is to consist of two Frenchmen, one of whom will preside; two Spaniards, two Englishmen, one German. A Spaniard is to be public prosecutor. The war, of course, may upset the programme permanently.

Offering the advantages of an ideal athletic stadium, together with the accessibility of the location, the new Velodrome at Sheep-head Bay, which will be the home of cycling around New York City in the future, also promises to be the grounds on which other athletic contests of the metropolitan district will be settled. General Manager C. C. Cram, who succeeded the late Floyd A. McFarland, has arranged a cycling and motorcycle program that will commence at the rattle from May 22, the opening date of the season. The total cost of the stadium and its organization is estimated at \$100,000 and up to \$150,000.

The actual number of workmen killed and injured annually in the United States is not known definitely. The best authorities, however, have estimated fatalities to the number of 40,000 to 45,000 annually, and non-fatal accidents producing an annual loss of 200,000,000 working days. Estimating the value to society of each man killed at \$5,000, and \$2 as an average daily wage of the non-fatally injured, the economic annual loss sustained by the nation amounts to approximately \$600,000,000. This is the amount which, in some way or other, must be charged to the production cost in the various industries where the accidents occurred.

Charges that George Farmer was shanghaied aboard the British mule ship, Anglo-Australian, at New Orleans, and that severe treatment afterward was contributory to his death, are made in a \$10,000 libel suit filed against the vessel by Edward Farmer, his father. Young Farmer died three days after the vessel left New Orleans, Feb. 17, for Avonmouth, according to reports of the vessel's officers, when they arrived recently. They said he had been seized with an epileptic fit soon after going aboard. In the petition filed the father charges that Farmer was taken aboard the vessel in an intoxicated condition and lashed to a stanchion. The petition sets forth his treatment resulted in a fit and that he died without attention.

When the Navy Department issued its order by which enlisted men overstaying their leave and committing other offenses were to be discharged at the option of the commanding officer, or placed on probation, there was much curiosity as to how the innovation would result. Statistics compiled by the Army and Navy Journal show that the desertions in July, 1914, were 222; in August, 1914, 360, and in September of the same year, 310. When the order was put into effect in October there were 259 desertions; in November they dropped to 193. Since that month the desertions have been as follows: December, 153; January, 176; February, 84, and all records were broken in March, when there were only fifty-four desertions.

A jury before Judge Julian Mack in the United States District Court, New York, recently awarded Mrs. Theresa Bump, a widow, of Baltimore, a verdict of \$15,000 in her suit against the French Line for injuries which she received on the steamship Rochambeau on April 14, 1914, while the ship was on the high sea. Mrs. Bump was returning from a vacation in Europe. According to her complaint, she was passing down a dark passageway to the place where the captain had put her pet poodle when the ship struck a heavy sea and she was hurled against the wall of the passageway, sustaining a broken nose, two fractured fingers and other injuries. The ship's doctor, she says, told her she was lucky that she was found upon her arrival in New York to have a great amount of money to have the color of her face restored.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

NEW ELECTRIC BELL.

An original electric bell combination is in use at Paris which is designed to get rid of all trouble caused by the question of batteries, for these are now lodged within the apparatus itself. The usual box bell-shape is retained, but the arrangement of the parts is different in this case. All the magnet parts are now lodged under the gong itself, while the box, being now left free, serves to contain a set of three dry battery cells which will last for several years. In this way there are no connections to be made between the battery and bell, and the wires and push-button are the only pieces which need to be attended to.

WOMEN'S BANK A FAILURE.

The police of Berlin seized the books of the Women's Bank, which was widely heralded upon its organization two years ago as the only financial institution in the world organized, capitalized, and managed exclusively by women for women. This step was ordered in connection with proceedings instituted against the bank by the Crown Prosecutor for alleged fraud and misuse of deposits.

The bank started out well after its foundation and attracted large deposits from women, but later was chiefly conspicuous owing to its difficulties. The managers were forced to seek the assistance of men and it is said that at the beginning of the war they avoided bankruptcy only by establishing connections with one of the regular Berlin banks.

NEGRO DIES AT 123.

Major Johnson, negro, of Millville, Ga., who claimed to be 123 years old, was found dead in his bed recently as a result of influenza, which he contracted three weeks ago. According to a memorandum found among his belongings, which is said to be an exact copy of one given to a slave buyer in New Orleans by his original owner, Dr. Johnson, some years before the Civil War, Uncle Major, as he was familiarly known, was born May 5, 1792, in Wayne County, Ga.

About the age of maturity he removed with his master, Dr. Johnson, to South Carolina and remained there until a few years before the war between the States, where he was sold to a slave buyer in New Orleans.

Shortly afterward he was bought for \$2,000 by Captain Daniel Tobin, of Hampton, Ark. After a number of years of faithful service he went to Texas, where he remained for some time. Returning to Arkansas in 1895 he came to Millville.

EMDEN'S CREW FIGHTS ARABS.

The German officers and sailors who composed the crew of the cruiser Emden when she was sunk in the Indian Ocean by an Australian warship on November 10 have escaped again from allied patrol ships and arrived at the Arabian harbor of Lidd on March 27.

After reaching the coast the men attempted to continue their journey overland, but were attacked by Arabs. The Arabs were repulsed after three days' stubborn fighting and the sailors reached the road to Hodachas, where the railroad was open. The Germans, however, suffered heavy losses. This dispatch tells another chapter in the exploits of that remnant of the Emden's crew, who were members of a landing party on Cocos Island when the battle took place between the Australian cruiser Sydney and the Emden. Lieut. von Muecke, in charge of the landing party, commandeered the schooner Aysha and sailed away. From Manila came a report that they had captured a collier and had been making raids on French commerce. On December 18 the French Ministry of Marine announced that the auxiliary cruiser Empress of Japan had captured the collier, with the men on board. Berlin heard on April 5, however, that the Aysha had reached Hodeida, Arabia. A dispatch received recently, referring to Lidd, may mean Jidda on the seacoast of Arabia. Apparently the Germans are making for Turkey.

CONTINUOUS AVIATION COMPETITIONS.

Most elaborate plans have been made by the Aero Club of America, in co-operation with its affiliated clubs, some twenty-five in number, for a series of daily competitions continuing from July 4th. This competition is to be for the greatest distance covered in ten hours during the ninety days, and those making the best records will be awarded prizes, including a special daily prize of \$100. Flights may be made from any of the official aerodromes, to be designated in various parts of the United States, and any or all of the aviators may start each day.

These competitions are designed to assist the army and navy departments in developing aviation corps for the National Guard and Naval Militia, to demonstrate for the postoffice department the practicability of carrying mail by aeroplane to the hundreds of isolated places where it now takes days to deliver mail which could be delivered by aeroplane in a few hours, and to develop the sport in general.

The competitions are on the same plan as those for the Pommery Cup in France, which resulted in great benefit to the sport in that country, and developed many remarkable performances.

Nine prominent aviators and constructors have already made known their intention to enter these contests, and it is gratifying to the committee that all the entrants so far propose to use American-made aeroplanes and motors; and it is an encouraging indication of the interest aroused, and the progress made since our Government has shown an indication of its intention to increase the use of aeroplanes in the army and navy.

It is expected that among the contestants will be Lawrence B. Sperry, with two machines, one a regular land aeroplane and the other a flying boat, both equipped with gyroscopic stabilizers.

THE CREEPING MOUSE

This is the latest novelty out. The mouse is of very natural appearance. When placed upon a mirror, wall, window or any other smooth surface, it will creep slowly downward without leaving the perpendicular surface. It is furnished with an adhesive gum-roll underneath which makes it stick. Very amusing to both young and old. Price 10 cents each, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

POCKET SAVINGS BANK.

A perfect little bank, handsomely nickel plated. Holds just five dollars (50 dimes). It cannot be opened until the bank is full, when it can be readily emptied and relocked, ready to be again refilled. Every parent should see that their children have a small savings bank, as the early habit of saving their dimes is of the greatest importance. Habits formed in early life are seldom forgotten in later years. Price of this little bank, 10c.; 3 for 25c., mailed postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

DUPLEX BICYCLE WHISTLE.

This is a double whistle, producing loud but very rich, harmonious sounds, entirely different from ordinary whistles. It is just the thing for bicyclists or sportmen, its peculiar double and resonant tones at once attracting attention. It is an imported whistle, handsomely nickel plated, and will be found a very useful and handy pocket companion. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c.; one dozen, 75c., sent by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



hand. The witnesses are asked to pass their hand around it to assure themselves no thread or hair is used. Price, 25c.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

PIGGY IN A COFFIN.

This is a wicked pig that died at an early age, and here he is in his coffin ready for burial. There will be a great many mourners at his funeral, for this coffin, pretty as it looks, is very tricky, and the man who gets it open will feel real grief. The coffin is made of metal, perfectly shaped and beautifully lacquered. The trick is to open it to see the pig. The man that tries it gets his fingers and feelings hurt, and piggy comes out to grunt at his victims. The tubular end of the coffin, which everyone (in trying to open) presses inward, contains a needle which stabs the victim in his thumb or finger every time. This is the latest and a very "impressive" trick. It can be opened easily by anyone in the secret, and as a neat catch-joke to save yourself from a bore is unsurpassed. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c., postpaid; one dozen by express, 75c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE GREAT FIRE EATER.

A great Sensational Trick of the Day! With the Fire Eater in his possession any person can become a perfect salamander, apparently breathing fire and ejecting thousands of brilliant sparks from his mouth, to the horror and consternation of all beholders. Harmless fun for all times, seasons and places. If you wish to produce a decided sensation in your neighborhood don't fail to procure one. We send the Fire Eater with all the materials, in a handsome box, the cover of which is highly ornamented with illustrations in various colors. Price of all complete only 15c., or 4 boxes for 50c., mailed postpaid; one dozen by express \$1.20.

N. B.—Full printed instructions for performing the trick accompany each box, which also contains sufficient material for giving several exhibitions.

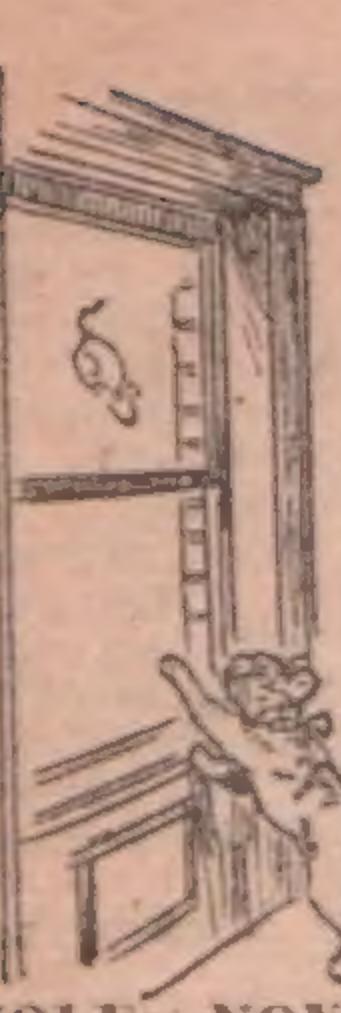
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



THE MAGIC NAIL.

A common nail is given for examination, and then instantly shown pierced through the finger; and yet, when taken out, the finger is found to be perfectly uninjured, and the nail is again given to be examined. Nicely finished.

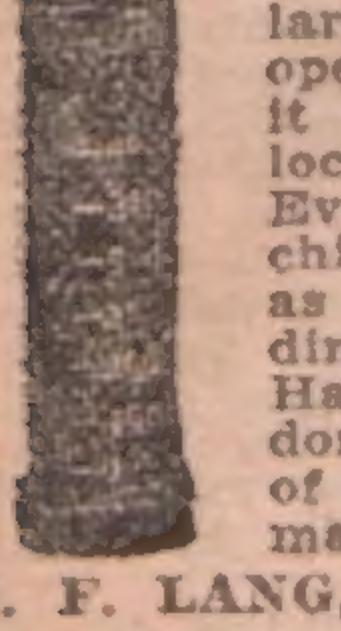
Price, 10c. by mail, postpaid.
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.



LINK THE LINK PUZZLE.

The sensation of the day. Pronounced by all, the most baffling and scientific novelty out. Thousands have worked at it for hours without mastering it, still it can be done in two seconds by giving the links the proper twist, but unless you know how, the harder you twist them the tighter they grow. Price, 6c.; 3 for 15c.; one dozen, 50c., by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



THE SURPRISE FOUNTAIN PEN

A novelty of the greatest merit! It looks just like a genuine fountain pen. But it isn't. That's where the joke comes in. If you take off the cover, a nice, ripe, juicy lemon appears. Then you give the friend you lend it to the merry "ha-ha." You might call it an everlasting joke because you can use it over and over again. Price, by mail, postpaid, 10c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



FIFFL.

Also known as a Japanese butterfly. A pleasing novelty enclosed in an envelope. When the envelope is opened Fiffl will fly out through the air for several yards. Made of colored paper to represent a butterfly six inches wide. Price, 10c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

SLIDE THE PENCIL.

The pencil that keeps them guessing. Made of wood and lead just like an ordinary pencil, but when your victim starts to write with it—presto! the lead disappears. It is so constructed that the slightest pressure on the paper makes the lead slide into the wood. Very funny and a practical joke.

Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



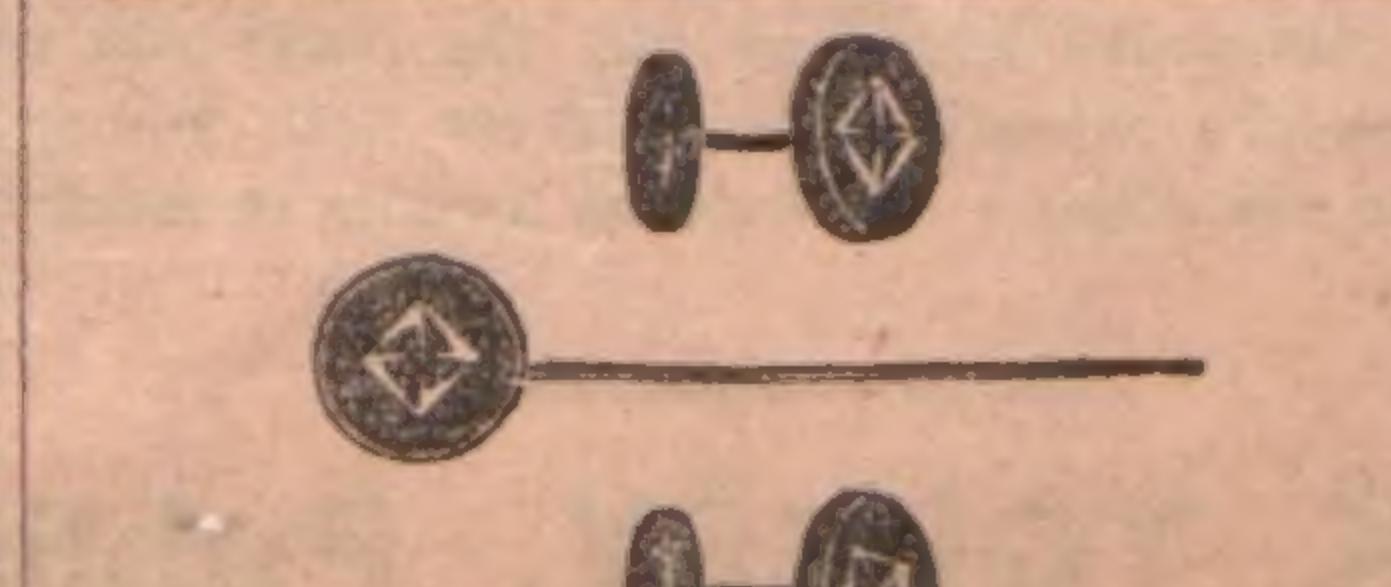
APPEARING BILLIARD BALL.—A solid billiard ball, beautifully made, can be made to appear in the bare hands with the sleeves rolled back to elbows. Very fine and easy to do.

Price, 35c.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

IMITATION CUT FINGER.

A cardboard finger, carefully bandaged with linen, and the side and end are blood-stained. When you slip it on your finger and show it to your friends, just give a groan or two, nose it up, and pull a look of pain. You will get nothing but sympathy until you give them the laugh. Then duck! Price, 10c., postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



GOLD PLATED COMBINATION SET.—With square turquoise stones.

Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



THE MAGIC NAIL.

A common nail is given for examination, and then instantly shown pierced through the finger; and yet, when taken out, the finger is found to be perfectly uninjured, and the nail is again given to be examined. Nicely finished.

Price, 10c. by mail, postpaid.

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A handsome ring connected with a rubber ball which is concealed in the palm of the hand. A gentle squeeze forces water or cologne in the face of the victim while he is examining it. The ball can be instantly filled by immersing ring in water same as a fountain pen filler. Price by mail, postpaid, 12c. each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



STAR AND CRESCENT PUZZLE.

The puzzle is to separate the one star from the linked star and crescent without using force. Price by mail, postpaid 10c.; 3 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE INK BLOT JOKER.

Fool Your Friends.—The greatest novelty of the age! Have a joke which makes everybody laugh. More fun than any other novelty that has been shown in years. Place it on a desk, tablecloth, or any piece of furniture, as shown in the above cut, near some valuable papers, or on fine wearing apparel. Watch the result! Oh, Gee! Price, 15c. each, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.



THE JOKER'S CIGAR.

The biggest sell of the season. A real cigar made of tobacco, but secreted in the center of cigar about one-half inch from end is a fountain of sparklets. The moment the fire reaches this fountain hundreds of sparks of fire burst forth in every direction, to the astonishment of the smoker. The fire is stage fire, and will not burn the skin or clothing. After the fireworks the victim can continue smoking the cigar to the end. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c.; 1 dozen, 90c., mailed, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE HELLO PUZZLE

Can you get the ring off? This puzzle is the latest creation of Yankee ingenuity. Apparently it is the easiest thing in the world to remove the ring from the block, but it takes hours of study to discover the trick, unless you know how it is done. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c.; 3 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

COMICAL FUNNY FACES.

This genuine laugh producer is made of nicely colored cardboard. A sharp, bent hook is at the back to attach it to the lapel of your coat. Hide one hand under the lapel and twitch the small, black thread. It will cause a red tongue to dart in and out of the mouth in the most comical manner imaginable at the word of command. It is very mystifying, and never fails to produce a hearty laugh.

Price, 6c. each by mail.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.



PICK-ME-OUT PUZZLE.

The head is finished in black japan, and in the mouth is a highly polished steel ball. The puzzle is to pick out the ball. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

TRICK CIGARETTE BOX.



This one is a corker! Get a box right away, if you want to have a barrel of joy. Here's the secret: It looks like an ordinary red box of Turkish cigarettes. But it contains a trigger, under which you place a paper cap. Offer your friend a smoke and he raises the lid of the box. That explodes the cap, and if you are wise you will get out of sight with the box before he gets over thinking he was shot. Price, 15c., postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

DEAD SHOT SQUIRT PISTOL.



If you shoot a man with this "gun" he will be too mad to accept the ancient excuse—"I didn't know it was loaded." It loads easily with a full charge of water, and taking aim, press the rubber bulb at the butt of the Pistol, when a small stream of water is squirted into his face. The best thing to do then is to pocket your gun and run. There are "loads of fun" in this wicked little joker, which looks like a real revolver, trigger, cock, chambers, barrel and all. Price only 7c.; 4 for 25c.; one dozen 60c. by mail postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

THE FIGHTING ROOSTERS.



A full blooded pair of fighting game cocks. These little fighters have real feathers, yellow legs and fiery red combs, their movements when fighting are perfectly natural and lifelike, and the secret of their movements

is known only to the operator, who can cause them to battle with each other as often and as long as desired. Independent of their fighting proclivities they make very pretty mantel ornaments. Price for the pair in a strong box, 10c.; 3 pairs for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

SURPRISE KINEMATOGRAPH.



The greatest hit of the season! It consists of a small metal, nickelized tube, with a lens eye view, which shows a pretty ballet girl in tights. Hand it to a friend, who will be delighted with the first picture; tell him to turn the screw in center of instrument to change the views, when a stream of water squirts into his face, much to his disgust. Anyone who has not seen this kinematograph in operation is sure to be caught every time. The instrument can be refilled with water in an instant, ready for the next customer. Price 25c. by mail, postpaid.

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 469 Matt, the Mechanic; or, The Boy Who Made His Pile.
 470 Among the Ice Peaks; or, The Voyage That Made the Money.

- 471 The Little Castaways; or, The Fortune That a Wreck Brought.
 472 Taking Big Chances; or, The Boy Who Saved a Town.
 473 Always Lucky; or, Winning on His Merits.
 474 Out for a Corner; or, A Smart Chicago Boy.
 475 The Winning Trick; or, How a Boy Made His Mark.
 476 The Young Editor; or, Running a Country Newspaper.
 477 A Big Stroke; or, The Lad Who Made a Record.
 478 In the Copper Field; or, The Mine That Made the Money.
 479 From a Cent to a Fortune; or, A Chicago Boy's Great Scoop.
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 481 A Wide Awake Boy; or, Born With a Winning Streak.
 482 Capturing the Money; or, How Ben Bailey Made His Mark.
 483 Digging for Gold; or, The Luck of a Boy Miner.
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 485 Andy, the Mill Boy; or, Rising to the Top.
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